

Elton Motello...

Jet boy bites back

Stuart Ross

Most people will know Elton Motello from his hit single, "Jet Boy, Jet Girl", but Motello has already released two stunning albums. His first, *Victim of Time*, was a celebration of depravity with short, deranged pop songs like "Teen Pimp" and "I Am the Marshal". His recent Pop Art continues the tradition of degeneracy, with fuller, more musically developed pieces, filled with both horror and humour. Maybe the beautiful, Bowie-esque "When All the Boys Are English" and the biting "Pay the Radio" will earn Motello the attention that's been evading him in North America. I spoke to him last week in a call from Belgium, and in contrast to his seedy persona, Motello was charming, sincere, and managed to keep his seediness under control.

There are a lot of pieces on the second album—real hit material in all different styles—but none of them get much airplay here. Are you really going after hits? Is that important to you?

To be honest with you: no. But that sounds pompous, doesn't it? Hits are not necessary to me. I'm going off to be Motello, I'm projecting something. I'd lose a lot of what Motello is about if I actually went out and chased the public to get hits.

A lot of your material doesn't deal with the classic love and death themes, but there's alienation, even in your album covers. Is the music industry alienating, or are you talking about life in general?

Everybody is being alienated—by the music industry and everything in general. Music, for example, is getting so middle-of-the-road it's eliminating all personalities. Like, "That recipe worked, let's try it again and again...." And that kind of standardization alienates everybody from everything. And there's a definite retaliation against that in my music.

Another of your themes is depravity...

It's a reaction to the 'nice' music

that started out just before the punk era. The music was so terribly nice then—you couldn't say anything. I personally like a good melody, but I'm not going to go for a subject that's easy. I'd rather deal with subjects that might not be so easy to get across, and treat them well.

You seem to keep all your doors open musically. Can you see yourself doing something totally different—maybe rhythm and blues?

The way we do Motello is to create the music that goes with the song. If I think rhythm and blues is the best format to get across the idea of a song, we are going to do rhythm and blues.

Why do you work in Belgium? What's there that London doesn't have?

That's a big story. I started off in England with a band called Bastards, just before the new wave thing blew up. We did some very heavy material with sort of Hell's Angels undercurrents, and this made it difficult to get gigs—nobody wanted that type of sound. So, the whole band got fed up. Brian James left and eventually formed The Damned. I came to Belgium, which was very central, close to Germany. I stayed here and finally got a contract with a record company. It's not because England's got less or more, it's that I landed here.

Does being there help you keep out of the mainstream of what's happening, give you a different perspective on it?

Yes. I do tend to go back to England fairly often, and I realize that everything that they think has a tendency to be just a shade different from what's actually happening. I can look over the Channel and say, "Ah, that's what's good, and that's what's bad."



Pop Art: Elton Motello times three

Bert don't hurt

Jon Mann

Turandot is quite a surprise. You can still catch a performance of it tonight, and really, you should.

What might have turned into a heavyhanded piece of didactic theatre has instead been rendered into a bawdy, boisterous comedy. Fast-paced, and witty, the play does try and teach Political Theory 101. But if you've had enough of that sort of thing in class, you can just sit back and laugh.

Brecht's play chronicles the fall of the Emperor of China after his attempt to corner the market on cotton in order to fill his bankrupt treasury. The Emperor is played by Guy Babineau, with a nervous energy most appropriate to the role.

Other fine performances in the cast of 60 were too numerous to

mention, but Kim Smith as Sen, Debra Aylwin as Turandot, Shawn Zevitt as the Prime Minister and Gerry Quigly as the War Minister were especially good.

The play managed to succeed just where it seemed easiest to fail. Through scene changes that must have numbered in the hundreds, the staccato, one-liner, rhythm never petered out.

While the cast was mammoth, it was well-rehearsed, and the numbers never seemed to get in the way of the performance.

Even the set design and costume were noteworthy.

If all this sounds too good to be true, perhaps it is. The ending was, to be honest, a bit weak. Still, *Turandot* is a light, lively evening's entertainment well worth the one dollar admission. At Burton.

Do you think that rock is starting to lose its human elements?

Very much so. Too many people are making records because they want to make money out of it. And they're using formulas: "Let's be a synthesizer band." And suddenly you're Gary Numan...or the Undertones...

That's why I found it really refreshing to hear those sort of

Bing Crosby bells in "20th Century Fox." What did you do before you go into music?

To be honest with you, I worked in a bank. (Laughter.) That was my first job. I was in bands through school, but my parents said, "Yeah, but what are you going to do as a real job?" So I chose the bank, the worst, most mind-killing thing, and continued in bands. After about a year and a half in the bank, I split.

Are you planning to tour North America?

I think, basically, it just depends on reaction. Being a European band, it's a long way, so it's what the record companies think. I put on the album, 'If you like the music, come and see us live,' because for me, in rock and roll, there is only that. What else is important? I mean, vinyl is great, but it's the actual contact with the people—it's the reaction that's most important.

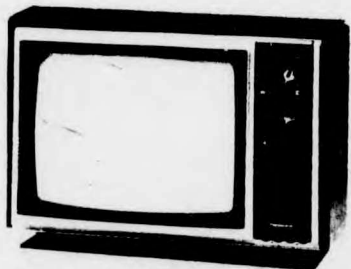
And finally, the cover of the first album shows you standing by a baby carriage containing a decked-out doll, as a 10-year old girl looks on from a doorway. What's going on?

It's just a bit of role-reversal, if you will. I was trying to show how things we sometimes think we know, can be completely changed. The doll becomes the proprietor of a whore house and the child becomes the thing that we're prostituting. The world is changing, but is it changing because we want it to change, or because the change is forced upon us?

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Poetry fiends and paleontology dabblers would do well to attend the Christopher Dewdney reading on Friday at 2 p.m. in the Calumet College Common Room. Dewdney is a startling craftsman and an absorbing reader. So, be there, take notes, and get great bagels next door.