

Itching for a hit anywhere in this wide world



Hans Vandenburg (second from the right) is still hopeful of leading Gruppo Sportivo to fame and riches, and power.

Paul Ellington

Listening to some Toronto radio stations, one may wonder what kind of state the music business is in. The amount of garbage that's being passed off today as music is incredible.

Today's music ranges from being absolute trash to being completely boring and redundant. It seems that a lot of the vitality and creativity has gone out of today's rock music. Are we dealing with a music industry

that is so completely based on hype that it is no longer capable of distinguishing between the good and the bad?

Indeed, the categories of good and bad may become obsolete, if with the proper media campaign, any guitar-plucking super-amped band can become a saleable product. Some of the negative aspects of the music industry are brought home to us when we come in contact with a band that has creativity and vitality but is not getting the recognition it deserves. Such is the case of Holland's Gruppo Sportivo, a progressive rock band based in Europe, which for years has been trying to arrange a North American tour.

HEAVY ACCENT

In an exclusive telephone interview with *Excalibur*, Hans Vandenburg, guitarist and song writer for the band explained their predicament in his heavily accented voice. "I think we'll come to the States or to Canada when our album is selling well—

you know as long as we don't hear the album is selling well, or that we've got a hit single out over there it's too expensive to gamble. We don't know more than they are telling us, you know."

NO AIR PLAY

The fact of the matter is that Gruppo Sportivo is not getting much air play although they easily have half a dozen songs which could make the North American charts. The group remains confident though, and is itching to get a crack at North America. Says Vandenburg, "I know that if we're going to play there, that we will be very successful. It's just the steps to go there. (Besides, since) we're not very successful in Holland, I don't know if they want to invest in Sportivo to play there (North America)."

IRREPRESSIBLE STYLE

Gruppo Sportivo is realistic and very honest about the difficulties they are experiencing in Holland and North America. Still, the band tours extensively in Europe showing a versatility that makes them unique. Commenting on the group's individual style of music and the irrepressible sense of humour which underlies all their compositions, Vandenburg says, "We want to go back to the old style a little bit more because there are so many synthesizer bands right now that if you're going to make that kind of music too — you know you won't be anything special anymore."

"But there is a development in our style — we change lot — I'm a better guitar player now than I was in 1976 so probably you will hear that on the album."

The album in question, *Pop Goes the Brain* (Attic), is Sportivo's latest and runs true to the group's philosophy. Included on this album are *My Old Cortina*, a fast-paced nostalgic song, *Rhythm is a Constant Beat*, a song reminiscent of the instrumental guitar sounds of the late '50's and early '60's, *Christine*, a romantic song which features the light sounds of bells in the background.

With *Pop Goes the Brain*, Gruppo shows an ability to give us a variety of sensory

experiences from an inter-planetary space flight to Mercury to a humorous description of changing times in Holland. This group will try anything once, and the sky is usually the limit. Their range exists from the cat-like purrings of a saxophone to the continental sounds of the accordian, to a variety of electronic effects which they use with remarkable results.

Hopefully, with *Pop Goes the Brain*, Gruppo will gain the recognition they deserve, and find their place on the airwaves. We could certainly use the change.

Baryshnikov hand picks class soloists

J. Brett Abbey

March traditionally unlocks the door to Spring, the end of school, and a step closer to a sweet summertime. This year, March is also the month that American Ballet Theatre II (ABTII) makes its Canadian premiere.

Under the direction of world-renowned soloist, Mikhail Baryshnikov, ABT II will perform from March 16 - 20 inclusive, at the Ryerson Theatre. This classical repertory ballet company consists of fifteen highly talented young dancers, hand-picked by Baryshnikov to be developed as soloists for its world class parent company.

The Toronto programme promises a rich and delightful evening of entertainment, which will include *Raymonda*, a restaged George Balanchine "pas de dix", and *One In Five*, a piece originally created for the National Ballet by Ray Powell. Also to be performed is *Sequels*, a new creation by Lynne Taylor-Corbett, whose romantic duet, *Diary* was a big hit when performed has year by Les Ballets Jazz.

There are still good seats available for all performances, at reasonable prices (\$11, & \$15). You can obtain your tickets at all Ticketron outlets, or the Ryerson Box Office. For more information contact Ryerson at 595-5088.

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