

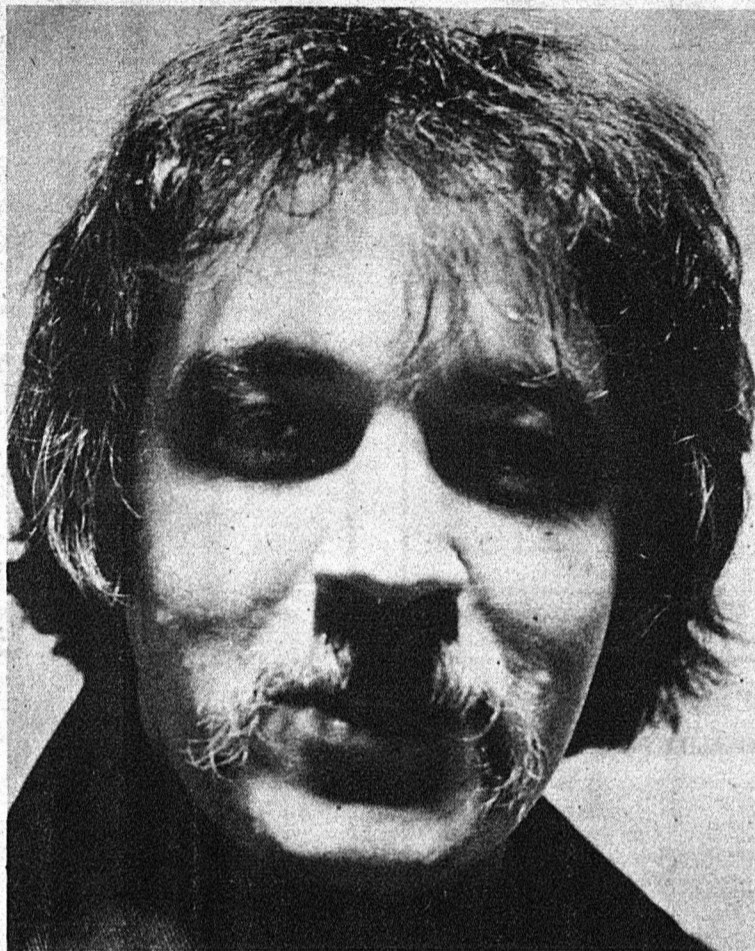
Punch in the face no threat now

Feature by Brent Kostyniuk

Geoff Richardson is the viola player in Caravan, the group that stole Sunday evening's concert which was headlined by Procol Harum. The following is an interview he gave a Gateway reporter shortly after the concert.

Richardson plays without a great deal of theatrics, but with much skill. He started his musical career when he was eight. "Your parents say you have to play an instrument when you are going to school. They have a bundle of violins and I did that for about two or three years until the onset of puberty when you start going out with girls. I went to a heavy school and you can't say you play the violin or you'll get punched in the face. Actually I did go through a period of getting punched in the face. The kid with the violin case always got it.

"I played guitar during my teens as a semi pro. We did folk blues at concerts in England. Later I went to art college for five years and someone formed a band while I was there. College bands always need someone to play bass because it isn't as exciting or glamorous as lead guitar. So they made me play bass."



Geoff Richardson of Caravan.

photo by Keith Miller

Viola is an unusual instrument to be found in a rock group. Geoff explains the beginnings of this. "I started playing the violin about four years ago while I was still at college. It was a rotten violin and at the same time I was playing a rotten viola. A rotten viola sounds better than a rotten violin so it was more satisfying and I continued with it. About three years ago I met Caravan. I told the members I used to play the viola and thought that we should give it a try. They are all very good musicians and are into doing new things.

"Also, I think it is easier to amplify a viola through a PA than a violin. The viola's sound is much more rich. You sometimes get horrible electric violin sounds when you try to amplify that instrument. If you put in all the overtones it can sound quite bad. I like to think the viola is not as bad; you can get a reasonably natural sound."

A flute was used sparingly by Geoff along with a banjo. "While I was at college I had a friend who had a flute and I used to borrow it and eventually got into it. I would say that I've actually been properly trying to play the flute for just over a year. I'm absolutely a base amateur on the flute, but I'm working on it.

"I think I can say with reasonable honesty that there aren't a lot of instruments that I haven't picked up, that I haven't been able to do something presentable on. I don't think that I excel technically on any instrument. My father was the same. He played in a dance band in the thirties and could play banjo, clarinet, guitar."

Caravan's music takes a while to grow on you but it isn't long before you enjoy it. "It's a culty kind of music. Caravan has been playing for seven or eight years and in that time in Europe we have got a large following, an enormous following for a cult. This means that every album that we do is a low chart entry, for a few weeks. That means that everyone in our cult goes out and buys an album."

Geoff reconsiders. "No, that's not doing them justice. But they do certainly go out and

buy Caravan straightaway. It's that sort of audience which we've got. I think we are establishing that same thing in Canada and America. Its vaguely esoteric music. Its good fun on stage but in an album you have to take in the whole market thing. You have to try and experiment. And I guess that the music will change one way or the other."

Caravan's music has been referred to as very good stage music. "I think that it is. Personally - and other members of the band may disagree with me - I prefer the band on stage to the band on records. I think that a lot of fans do. I think the band makes different kinds of records, I think we play different kinds of music. In a way, its sort of a lightweight, jaunty sort of music. When we do the same thing on stage its a bit more dramatic."

A jazz sound has become an established precedent in the band. Richardson says that "it is an identifiable kind of song, a Caravan sort of song. Its a song with an arrangement, and solo bits and loose bits and eventually it all comes back together. Its a jazz form."

Like good jazz musicians, Caravan improvises on stage and really enjoy their work. "Caravan was a soul band originally. In 64 or 65 it was a band called the Wildflower. The stuff we used to play with the band in college was like Zappa, so I have a jazz outlook. I don't know what I really want to play but I listen to other groups to see what they are doing."

Caravan's music also leans towards electric sound. "We are not getting technically obsessive with electronic music. Caravan has always been a multikeyboard group. As soon as synthesizers came into production we went out and got one. As for the viola, apart for the echo and the PA there is nothing I do with it electronically. It's something I'm not interested in. I'd rather get effects with bowing and that sort of thing."

Although Geoff Richardson and Caravan were backup this time, they should be heard in a full concert for their particular sound to be wholly appreciated.

Well, Procol bored 'em...

The lack of response to the Procol Harum concert Sunday night was due not to lack of fine music, but rather to an unfortunate set of circumstances. The concert contained everything which could have been expected, yet people were leaving halfway through and continued to leave until the end. The band did not come back for an encore after a long, although half-hearted, ovation.

Afterwards backstage, members of the group thought that 11 p.m. was a "bloody awful time" to start a concert. Indeed it was, and expecting an audience to appreciate a group which doesn't start to play until nearly an hour after midnight is a bit much. Talking with the group backstage they felt they played a good concert and couldn't explain the lack of acceptance to their music. "Conquistador" and "Salty Dogs", songs which became hits in Edmonton and made the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra world famous in rock music circles, were well received but others stimulated only polite response.

The audience left less than satisfied even though Procol Harum gave a good concert. The music was technically well-played and enjoyable to listen to. They started with a variety of old and new songs and continued this pattern until finishing with "Simple Sister." Procol has a skilled drummer, and his delicate cymbal work is a delight to listen to. His drum solo was the best which has been heard at the Jubilee in some time. Also effective was the combination of piano and organ which gives Procol a fresh sound.

Perhaps people came expecting a repeat performance of the Conquistador happening. This time the Edmonton Symphony was not there to back them up, but they have played in Edmonton since then

and been well received. There was a lot of unfamiliar music, but perhaps the biggest factor contributing to the audience's disappointment was due to the impact of the warmup group, Caravan.

Caravan is an English group which has been around for about eight years but is relatively unknown in Edmonton.

Their sound comes from the combination of guitar, bass, drums, viola and synthesizer-organ. It has jazz overtones and, like jazz, it can be listened to for a long time without getting boring. The fifty

minutes they were allotted at the beginning of the evening was simply not enough, and left the audience wanting more of the same. When Procol Harum came on, the people were simply not ready for them.

This Fire Production should have been two concerts. Caravan was called back for an encore, and probably would have received a couple more, if the house lights had not been turned on. Their section of the concert could have been doubled, and it would have been a good evening.

Brent Kostyniuk

Theatre for adventurous black

Citadel Too's first official season is specially designed for the theatrically adventurous! The program, which is 75 percent Canadian content, opens Monday with *Compulsory Option* by Vancouver playwright Sharon Pollock. Hailed as "black comedy at its best," this play is recommended for all ages. Featuring Ian Deakin, Keith Dinicol and Graham McPherson, *Compulsory Option* is directed by Keith Digby, who is associated with the Citadel Youth program.

Citadel Too's primary

motivation is aimed at widening audiences. The new company joins Citadel's mainstage in not only promoting new audiences to fill those extra seats in the new theatre; but, states John Neville, "also fulfilling the job that the theatre should do, that is appeal to every strata of society, every race and every creed and particularly every age group."

Citadel Too tickets are available through the Citadel box office at 10030 - 102 Street, 424-2828. Admission \$3.00. Students \$2.00.

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