

# It's a bird! It's a plane! No — it's Supertramp!

by Scott Neily

It was once said that 'the most constant thing in the universe is change'. International group Supertramp is the living proof of that axiom, and they ably demonstrated the depth of the changes that have taken place musically within the group over the years in a concert at the Metro Centre last Saturday night.

The group has a very long history. The basic genesis of the band began with the meeting of musicians Rick Davies and Roger Hodgson in 1970. Over the next few years, with the help of Dutch millionaire Sam, they gathered other musicians, signed a record deal with A&M, and managed to produce the albums *Supertramp* and *Indelibly Stamped*. While examples of the musical potential of the band, the albums were far from runaway successes. Supertramp mark I disbanded, and a few personal changes in 1973 saw the permanent addition of Dougie Thomson (bass), John Helliwell (sax), and Bob Siebenburg (drums) to the remaining core of Rick and Roger.

In 1974, Supertramp mark II released the album *Crime of the Century*. The record was a huge success worldwide, producing a

number of hit singles, including Roger's "Dreamer". That album prepared the public for the release of the successful records *Crisis! What Crisis!* in 1975, *Even in the Quietest Moments* in 1977, and *Breakfast in America* in 1979. With a following that reached fanatical proportions, especially in Canada, the band had risen to the status of superstardom by the end of the seventies. However, rough waters were ahead for the band. 1980 saw the release of the *Paris* live LP, and 1983 brought the light, poppy sounds of *Famous Last Words*, an album that unfortunately had a prophetic title. Roger Hodgson left the band at the end of the year, after the *Famous* tour, to start a solo career.

The departure of Hodgson pared the group down to a quartet and left Rick with the responsibility of the songwriting chores, a job he once shared with Roger. The band stuck together to produce 1985's *Brother Where You Bound* LP, from which the minorly successful single "Cannonball" was released. Even though a massive promotional campaign was launched, the album did not stand up to the multi-platinum sales of *Crime* or *Breakfast*, but it was a sign that

Supertramp was making a move to return to its jazz-R&B roots.

This year, Supertramp's efforts have come full circle with the release of *Free as a Bird*. The music on the album is very jazz-funkish in sound, and the lyrics are not nearly as dark and moody as some of the band's older material. A great deal of brass is used, giving a jumpy, bright feel to the LP, a stark contrast to the deep, dark synthesizers of past works (e.g. *Crime*). Currently, the album is not a huge success, but it is doing well on the charts, especially the singles that are dance-oriented.

The supporting tour for the album is going to be a worldwide effort, with dates in Canada, Europe, and the States. While in Halifax, drummer Bob Siebenburg elaborated on why the change in sound took place after the departure of Roger Hodgson. "Roger started to lighten things up a little bit there towards the end, with his pop sound and stuff. The band wanted to go in a different direction at that point, so there was a conscious effort not to repeat ourselves and to steer away from what the group was becoming," he said. "It was pretty easy for us to be very different without Roger, because his influence, in



Supertramp: (l to r) Rick Davies, John Helliwell, Bob Siebenburg, and Dougie Thomson.

songwriting, instrumentation, and arrangements, was enormous. So, once the personality of Roger was removed, things changed dramatically. It was like an automatic thing — Rick's personality and sense of musicality stepped right in and took over."

One of the bigger aspects of the new Supertramp is the more streamlined sound the band is producing. "It comes down to the fact that it's one writer's vision of what the band should be, rather than two," he said. "In the early days, they were very much in unison. Then, they became very different, and now, it's Rick's version of what things should be. Streamlined is a

pretty good word to describe the sound. Rick is a kind of minimalist, in a way. He likes to simplify everything and break down arrangements into their essentials. Although we augment it as a band, it doesn't sound particularly like big arrangements, with all these instruments and stuff, because it's so carefully put together. It's a little more sophisticated sound than we've had in the past, it's not quite so popkinda youngish oriented. It's a more mature music, stuff that lasts."

While the new music may not be too complicated, it does take a

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## Star Trek final frontier

by T. Wade Simms

**F**inal Frontier, a new book by veteran Star Trek author Diane Carey, is the latest addition to Pocket Books' giant-sized series of Star Trek novels. Timewise, the story takes place directly after the TV episode "City on the Edge of Forever". It begins with a period of emotional stress and soul-searching for Captain Kirk, who tries to find solace in some old letters written by his father. George Samuel Kirk, a starfleet

officer himself, wrote the letters while on a secret mission twenty-five years before, when Kirk was still a child. As the story jumps back and forth between present and past, father and son, Kirk finally comes to understand what kind of man his father was, a secret that was somewhat withheld from him through the years. Kirk realizes father run parallel to his own sense of duty, that is, they who will sacrifice all for the good of the service.

I don't want to give away too much, but I would be remiss if I failed to mention that the maiden voyage of the Enterprise is the focal point of the novel. The voyage contains more than one surprise, including a few Romulan elements. 'Nuff said!

If you are a Star Trek fan, you won't want to miss out on this read — it will grip you from cover to cover and give you some surprising insights on certain key people in the Trek universe. The story has great depth, and, as with all Star Trek novels, more than lives up to their well-known reputation of excellence and momentum. To all "Trek-kies", I highly recommend it. To those "non-Trek-kies", you have my sympathy — you don't know what you are missing.



## Recent thrillers feature old and new faces

### Shoot to Kill

by Meredith Usher

**S**hoot to Kill, the new film by Roger Spottiswoode (*Under Fire*) is definitely cause for rejoicing. In it, Sidney Poitier returns to acting after an absence of ten years. He was sorely missed, and he does not disappoint his fans in this new action thriller.



The story follows Poitier, who plays an FBI agent on the trail of a ruthless killer. When the killer decides to head for Canada through the Pacific Northwest, Poitier is forced into an uneasy partnership with mountain guide Tom Berenger (*Platoon*), whose girlfriend has been kidnapped by the killer.

What sets *Shoot to Kill* apart from the average action movie is Poitier's portrayal of a very human G-man who is out for

revenge. He delivers a typically flawless performance with humour and emotion, and it is a pleasure to watch such a consummate actor. It is also interesting to note that this film is one of the most physically demanding roles he has ever played. Considering that he is now sixty years old, this is a very impressive feat.

Combine this performance with stunning cinematography and breathtaking stunt work, and one gets a truly enjoyable film.

### She's having a baby

by Carol Montgomery

**W**hen I first saw the movie title *She's Having a Baby*, I wasn't impressed. The title made it sound as though it would be dull and boring. But surprise! This movie, has class: this time the baby occurs as a result of the marriage, not the reverse.

Actor Kevin Bacon, who gained star status in the film *Footloose*, plays the lead role of Jake, a typical newlywed who is not quite ready to settle down.

Elizabeth McGovern, who was seen in *Ordinary People*, is convincing as Jake's wife, Christine.

She is a research analyst who tries to be the perfect housewife and eventually the perfect mother (not just to Jake) all at the same time.

Director John Hughes expertly leads Jake in and out of fantasy and reality, letting all of our fears about marriage, the ultimate commitment, come to life.

Comments like the one that compares wives to lawn mowers — "fancy ones wear out fast, solid ones last a long time" — keep viewers entertained. The movie's high point comes when Jake finally resolves the uncertainty that has been haunting him since the wedding.

The film isn't without its flaws. Jake is working for slave wages as a writer and even with Christine's income, it is amazing how after only four years of marriage the couple manages to buy a BMW, an expensive home in the suburbs, and all the little luxuries that most people take a lifetime to acquire. I guess they never had to worry about paying back student loans.

Regardless, *She's Having a Baby* has spice and charm that any audience will enjoy.