

## Films

I'm afraid I can recommend *Boom* (at the Odeon) only to dedicated followers of the career of its director, Joseph Losey, of *King and Country*, *The Servant*, *Modesty Blaise* and *Accident* fame.

In *Boom* Losey is working not with the Dirk Bogarde of those four films—Losey created the "serious" Bogarde almost exactly as Antonioni created Monica Vitti—but with that other great fallen-angel face, the one Richard Burton wears. Mrs. Richard Burton comes with the package, of course; she gets once again to play an over-ripe termagant.

The Burtons have never looked so zestfully unhealthy, and Losey is notoriously good at bringing out the perverse beauties of decay. Visually, the film moves faultlessly from one super-rococo shot to the next. And yet one's admiration for Losey's skill keeps faltering in the face of the undeniable, the really shrieking badness of the film as a whole.

What has gone wrong is the script, freely drawn by Tennessee Williams from his own play *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More*.

Losey needs a restrained script to discipline his fancy (he has been well served by Harold Pinter in the past), but restraint has never been one of Tennessee Williams' virtues.

Williams used to be the last great operatic dramatist in America, capable of turning out set-piece arias and tirades whenever the intensity he aimed for required it. In his prime he could thus compensate for a thinness of thought and shrillness of feeling which have marred his works in direct proportion to their pretensions.

But now this gift seems to be slipping away from him.

It is not Elizabeth Taylor's fault that Mrs. Goforth's neurasthenic tantrums seem not terrible but silly. Their silliness is a function of Mrs. Goforth's being so "significant", heavily symbolizing Wealth, Womanhood, Blasted Beauty, Bitch-Power, and above all Dying, without Williams' giving her anything correspondingly magnificent to say.

Williams notices this, and sporadically pretends that Mrs. Goforth's banality is just the point. After keeping everyone awake dictating her memoirs over the intercom, she parodies herself the next morning by beginning a chapter on "The Meaning of Life".

But we're obviously meant to feel that somehow Mrs. Goforth's awareness of her own tediousness is itself grandly gallant, or grandly perverse, or grandly something.

It just might work on the stage. But here Losey gets in the way. The camera lovingly dwells upon the vulgarity of the grandeur. Losey, a sadistically anti-sentimental artist anyway, keeps subverting the sentimentality with which Williams hopes to convince us of the Significance of Mrs. Goforth's decline.

The screen-play keeps the subversion formless. The film is never allowed to cohere on the level of a send-up. Hence it does not cohere at all.

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A second viewing leaves me convinced that *Bandolero* (at the Paramount) is a splendid film, though less original than I at first thought. So many perversities are built into the genre that the surprising thing is not that ethically weird Westerns get made but that it's possible for the average Western to be so dull.

But let me try out my new thesis about the Western on you.

The Western typically takes the form of cowboy vs. Indian—at first anti-Indian, lately solidly pro. As its locale drifts south, the Mexican replaces the Indian. The Mexican is half-downtrodden peasant (see *The Magnificent Seven*) and half bandit, *bandolero*, a frightening gangster-revolutionary as totally alien from America as the Indian once was.

But what would happen to the Western if, as official American myth, it dealt directly with the paradigm American injustice, that directed against the Blacks?

I suspect it could be shown that it is just this submerged guilt which lends the Western much of its force. Not for nothing did Dean Martin and Jimmy Stewart, in *Bandolero*, fight on opposite sides in the Civil War.

—John Thompson

## THE NEW ROMANS

It is undeniable that Canada has been under the influence of the United States, culturally, politically, and financially, from her very beginnings. Any diehard nationalists who question the truth of this would do well to examine the reasons which drew the founding colonies into confederation.

Nevertheless, Canada has survived as an entity for one hundred and one years plus. Now, following our centennial, there has been an awakening, or perhaps merely an increase of national sense or identity. It is only natural that this sense should attempt to examine the effects of the American influence.

The most significant such examination to date is *The New Romans*, a book published by Mel Hurtig. Mr. Hurtig, with Canadian poet Al Purdy as his editor, conceived the idea of a symposium of Canadian opinions of America. Members of the Canadian intellectual elite were asked to submit short pieces stating precisely what they thought of America and Americans.

The result, as with all symposiums I suppose, is a patchwork quilt. There is a representation of many different ideas, and although the collection cannot do justice to any single attitude, a new pattern and consensus is formed.

This is, of course, both an ad-

vantage and a disadvantage. Take for example the piece by Robert Fulford, "Their America and Mine". Mr. Fulford makes a clear distinction between two faces of America—the vigorous cultural heritage and the decadent political reality—and asks if the one can survive the other. He is obviously concerned, compassionate, and blessedly rational. The points he raises are worthy of a much longer treatment, but with fifty contributing writers, space is a necessary limiting factor.

On the other hand, "Death Chant for Mr. Johnson's America", a poem by Raymond Souster, goes on far too long. I am sorry to say this, because it is a good poem. However, as an opinion of the United States, the poem is summed up in the first two lines: America/you seem to be dying. The remaining four and one half pages are largely superfluous vitriolic description.

Mr. Souster is not alone in his bitterness. At least half of the contributors betray this same emotional damnation. Too often they do so superficially, fuming about the tired clichés of Americana—bill-boards, beer cans, national arrogance, et cetera; without stopping to analyse these manifestations of the American problem.

The pattern of this melange is intriguing. A large majority of

the writers condemn the United States flatly and violently. A smaller proportion of them find some merit in America, and regret its imminent loss. Only one of two come out (stiffly) in favor of the U.S.

If this is indeed a representative cross section of Canadian opinion, it is evident that most Canadians would be quite happy if the USA continued on down the road to hell and stayed there; no questions asked, and please leave us alone.

Mr. Hurtig has made an unquestionable coup in the Canadian publishing industry. He no doubt realizes that the Canadian public is more than ready for a book of this sort, and that there will always be a market for condemnation anyway. Even if this were not so, there are many Americans who will enjoy reading about themselves.

Unfortunately, many Canadians who will read and applaud this book will do so for the wrong reasons. Those who read it as literature will be gratified, although this was not the purpose of the book. Editor Purdy uses literary style as the ultimate criterion. But those who read *The New Romans* to find a new expression of Canadian identity will be sadly disappointed. Identity is a positive thing and cannot be described by a negative reaction.

—Bill Pasnak

## CKSR record reviews

ONCE UPON A SUMMERTIME: CLEBANOFF STRINGS Decca DL4956—includes Wait Until Dark; The Last Waltz; Within You Without You; Once Upon a Summertime; Valley of the Dolls; others.

For popular music, the secret to success is originality. It seems that easy-listening albums featuring string instruments are either so dull that they are suitable only as background music, or else they are over-arranged, employing so many gimmicks that they become ludicrous. An exception to this trend is the latest offering by the Clebanoff strings. This L.P. is neither over-arranged nor gimmicky, yet it is quite imaginative. Hermann Clebanoff's versatility as a conductor and arranger has to be heard in order to be believed. This album features everything from the big beat employed in "Far from the Madding Crowd" and "When Will it End", to the subdued, almost classical sounds of Clebanoff's own composition "After Midnight". Rhythmic variations within each song result in the listener always being prepared for the unexpected.

Special mention must be given to Clebanoff's own violin solos, the guitar solo in "Samba Brasileira", the two bazukis featured in "Theme from the Day the Fish Came Out", and the use of the exotic tibia in George Harrison's "Within You Without You"; the latter alone being worth the price of the album.

THE MASON WILLIAMS PHONOGRAPH RECORD Warner Bros. 1729

Mason William's first album is surprisingly good in some respects while quite disappointing in others. Williams shows himself to be a versatile writer (his songs have been recorded by many of America's top folk singers, in particular the Kingston Trio) and also a more than adequate singer.

The most popular tune on the album, "Classical Gas", at one time had great value as a novelty tune since it combines several forms of music; Mason Williams describes it as "half flamenco, half Flatt and Scruggs, and half classical". However, due to overexposure all the novelty has been lost. It is fortunate that Classical Gas is the first cut on side 2, since it makes it

easy for the listener to skip that cut and go onto the next one. The other disappointments on the album are a two-bit Rock 'n Roll song called "She's Gone Away", a trite instrumental with the deceiving title of "Baroque-a-Nova", and a childish effort called "The Prince's Panties". However, these disappointments can be overlooked if one listens to his two folk ballads "Wanderlove" and "Longtime Blues", the colorful "Overture", or the infectious "All the Time". The two highlights of the album are "Sunflower", a beautifully arranged instrumental, and his witty twenty-seven second "Life Song" ("Isn't Life the perfect thing to pass the time away?").

As a whole, the Mason Williams phonograph album will make a very interesting addition to any record collection.

THE COLLECTORS Warner Bros. WS 1746

It seems rather idealistic to think that a Canadian group could possibly put out a progressive 'rock' album which can rate favorably with anything currently on the American or British sales charts. However, it looks like the Collectors have done it with their very first album. The Collectors are a group from Vancouver, formerly under the name of Howie Vickers and the Classics (remember the Monday "Music Hop" series on Television?) who went to the United States to record an album after a few rather unsuccessful singles. All the selections on the L.P. with the exception of "Lydia Purple" were written and arranged by the Collectors. The group excels on such instruments as the tenor saxophone, organ, flute, recorder, bass, guitar, drums, and percussion. For "Lydia Purple", a piano, harpsichord, vibes, and cello are added.

Featured on one side of the album is a twenty minute suite "What Love", which examines with frightening realism the discrepancy between our ideals of love and love as it is practiced in Western Society. ("Violence is virile and tenderness is senile.") Although it does not say anything that can be described as profound, it succeeds in portraying the frustration experienced by the younger generation, in particular as they try to

understand the world in which they are growing up. One of the high points of the suite is a beautiful saxophone solo by Claire Lawrence (who also plays organ, recorder, and flute).

The other cuts on the L.P. are excellent. "Howard Christman's Older" is a powerful protest on the backwardness of a so-called progressive society. "Lydia Purple" is a very touching description of a young lady who has dropped out of society—or perhaps society has dropped her. "One Act Play" describes very effectively the difficulty two people have in communicating their true feelings. Musically, this and "She, Will-o-the-Wind", which features some very difficult guitar work by Bill Henderson, are probably the best on the album.

Skillful instrumental arrangements, good harmony, and powerful vocals by Howie Vickers combine with meaningful lyrics to make "The Collectors" one of the best albums of the year.

SPECIAL REQUEST—THE LETTERMEN Capital ST 2934—includes Walk on By; More; Cherish; Venus; Secret Love; Sherry Don't Go; Summer Song; A Song for Young Love; others.

This new album by the Lettermen conjures up a picture of three dedicated young men standing in a straight line, their noses buried in a song book, making a painful effort to sing the notes exactly as written. Their main ability seems to lie in making a modern Burt Bacharach composition sound like something Doris Day might have sung in the early '50's.

Second-rate orchestration, unimaginative vocal arrangements, and a totally colorless performance by the Lettermen make up an album which becomes tedious even when used as background music. Beside the Letterman, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir would sound psychodelic.

P.S. Speaking of poor performances, I wonder how many of you caught Arthur and Glover up at the Room at the Top during F.I.W.

All albums reviewed in this column can be heard on CKSR Student Radio. Studios are located in Room 224 of SUB.

—LARRY SAIDMAN