

Cassel: Nebulous Rebel

Interview by Trevor Buckle
What does the term 'Nebulous Rebel' mean to you? To David Cassel, it is the name of the performance association in which he plays a major role. In fact, Cassel is directing and acting in a new play called *To Be a Servant or a Master*, which was produced at the association's downtown headquarters, The Multipurpose Rumpus Room, from March 1-6.

The Rebels themselves are, according to Cassel, "an association of performing artists

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and professionals dedicated to the world evolution and development of the performing arts." They came into being in 1983 when two actors, Mury Wright and Sherry Dale Hick, joined together to produce a performance piece for an arts festival in Calgary.

In 1984, Cassel, and others, met the two artists and joined their group. As a result of the diverse backgrounds of the new members, the name which was originally created for fun actually became indicative of what the group was all about. And thus, the Nebulous Rebels Performance Association was born.

The Rebels have offices in Calgary and San Francisco as well, and they work together in a kind of co-op. When the Edmonton Rebels performed in San Francisco, their California cousins helped arrange publicity, bookings, and housing for them. This arrangement works in the same way when the group from California comes to Alberta.

The Rebels' approach to acting is that of the Third Theatre. In a sense, the actor is the theatre. Their group does not receive much government funding, unlike the Big Brick Playhouse downtown which will remain nameless. The actors must help build the sets, sew the costumes, and all the other work involved in the production.

However, Cassel sees this involvement as a positive thing; this approach is "more comprehensive because the actor knows everything there is to know about his or her environment, and, as a result, can use it to the optimum advantage. This is what Third

Theatre is all about." The drama is produced on a largely visual, not vocal base, on the premise of creating a universal form of communication that transcends language and cultural barriers.

Cassel himself has received a substantial amount of diverse training. He has gone to theatre schools in Toronto and Montreal. Also, he was part of a San Francisco mime troupe which focused on popular theatre with social themes. He has trained at the Theatre Beyond Words, and Edmonton's own Academy of Corporal Mime. On top of all this, he has dabbled in figure skating and trained extensively in dance.

To Be a Servant or a Master is a play produced in the tradition of the commedia dell'arte. This was a dramatic art form common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which used basic human stereotypes, like the young lovers or the old miser, and perverted them into clown figures. In this play, the Rebels resurrected these characters with all their foibles, but using an original twist, tailored to the number and abilities of the actors in the troupe.

The presentation itself used medieval and baroque music, and period costumes and settings, but the humor was more contemporary. However, Cassel states that "people laugh, and have been laughing at the same things for eons. The humour doesn't change." Cassel feels that his group can create the magic from the past because the fifteenth century performers were closely knit troupes, as Cassel's is, and that this will come through on the stage.

Cassel feels that the most important aspect of staging a production is keeping the lines of communication open between the actors. The Rebels have been working on this particular production daily for over four months, and frustrations and problems have naturally arisen. He feels these must be worked out so that energies can be focused on every possibility to make the production fresh and dynamic.

Is modern drama and acting moving toward the Third Theatre technique? Cassel hopes so. Although it can be frustrating at times, it creates a camaraderie in the troupe, and helps create a more down-to-earth approach to theatre.

As Cassel puts it, "the theatre is a direct reflection of the culture we live in, and culture is a direct reflection of the society we live in, so how we deal with each other while we're working on a show is how we deal with each other just out there, in the big place. If this show is helping to work out problems, then I'd like to think it is a positive thing."



Dark underbelly of Canada's music scene

From Canada's underground

It Came From Canada Volume 3
Various Artists
(Og)

review by Mike Spindloe

Montreal's Og Records continues to nourish the throbbing dark underbelly (or something like that) of the (mostly eastern) Canadian music scene with the third volume in their *It Came From Canada* series. Cunningly designed in the usual garage band compilation mode with cartoon graphics and plenty of exclamation marks, the disc features 15 tracks by 15 bands who share a common love of styles of music that have names which end in -billy.

That's billy as in rocka, sludgea, psycha and hill, plus '60s garage rock, punk, urban primitive swing, alternative scat, sleazy blues, Vegas garage, and just plain cool stuff. Obviously not your mainstream billy here. And when it's good it's great and when it's bad it's really bad, just like someone else once claimed to be, and only occasionally mediocre.

But it's mostly great, and instead of burdening you with the merits of each particular billy, I'll mention a very few things of special interest. One is Montrealese E.J. Brule's "Killer

Wahle Attack", which will undoubtedly inspire a new award category titled "alternative scat" at all the hot music award shows.

Condition, also from Montreal, revamps "Hound Dog" in a completely original and schizophrenic manner, while The Gruesomes, from, you guessed it, Montreal, retitle "All Day and All of the Night" as "Your Lies" and get away with it — but barely. Ex-Edmontonians Jerry Jerry and the Sons of Rhythm Orchestra are included with "Yap Yap."

It occurred to me as I was enjoying this four ounces of vinyl with a whole in the middle that Og records might actually, if we may be serious for a moment, be preserving some valuable history herein (and formerly therein). For instance, The Mongols, from, of all places, Montreal, recorded one EP before their leader, Kim Shadow's untimely demise, and have their "Sleepwalk" included here.

Many of the bands are otherwise unrecorded and might have remained so. Some have been with us for years and have lots, or at least some, vinyl out but remain relatively obscure to the masses. So in addition to being a good listen, *It Came From Canada Volume 3* stands up as a veritable document of the times. Og Music, Box 182, Station F, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 2L1 for info or a catalog.

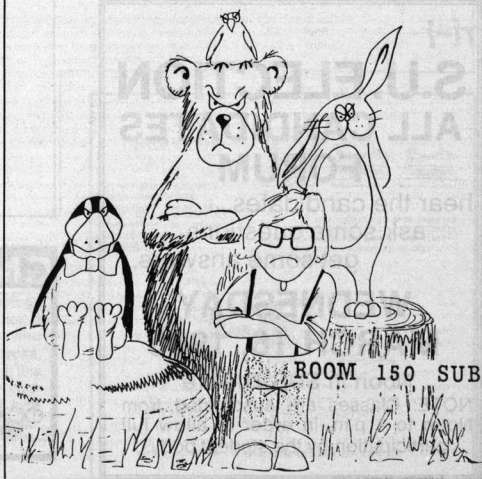
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