

ENTERTAINMENT

West Coast "fuck band" . . .

Delivering the goods

Alt and Morowicz

"I've got to win this time
"I've got to get to the top
"Cause it's the only way
"I can get them to respond"

The Vancouver music scene is a melting-pot of styles and forms. As Bill Shirt, lead vocalist of Los Popularos, explained in a recent interview, "In Vancouver in the great majority of the underground, there is a greater tolerance for a bit of this and a bit of that which probably produced our kind of music." But just what is their type of music?

Los Popularos call themselves a "fuck band", which leaves us just as much in the dark about their musical style. Various critics have called them mersey beat, rocked-up bubblegum, grown-up garage band, the biggest piece of flotsam left on the Pacific shores after the New Wave backwash, undistinguished mainstream rock, disposable pop, beer-drinking, chain-smoking, music-making Vancouver good ole boys, artful manipulators of cliched sounds, and bum romantics.

Hi-ho.

Art Bergman, formerly of the Young Canadians, is the man who gave us that memorable Canadian classic, "Let's Go To Fucking Hawaii". A prolific songwriter, Bergman is quiet off-stage, hiding behind his shy exterior a cynical turn of phrase and sharp mind. He is a veteran in the music business, wearing his 20-odd years with a dandyish air of defiance on stage. Having left the spotlight of the Young

Canadians, he seems to enjoy his relative anonymity in Los Popularos, concentrating on lead guitar and back-up vocals. His aggressive on-stage stance is exaggerated by a vicious attack on the mike and unique, commanding guitarwork. Although he is consciously avoiding centre stage, Bergman seems to be born for it.

The man in the limelight is Bill Shirt, formerly of Active Dog. Active maybe, but he's no dog. He flaunts a Bowie-like beauty with an understated abandon, shifting smoothly from an angelic appeal to a self-confident 'pretty boy'.

Keyboardist Gord Nicoll may be known to Toronto audiences as the Pointed Sticks' Dash Hammer, that tough man-of-the-world. His quiet, intense on-stage concentration displays the

hungry, lean look of a suburban intellectual gone cosmopolitan. Nicholl lives for music and travel, although a good meal once in a while would probably allow him to enjoy these pursuits in a heartier fashion. Tony Bardach, face totally obscured by a flirtacious forelock, plays bass. Like Nicholl, Bardach spent time with the Pointed Sticks. Ex-Dilsman Zippy Pinhead pounds the drums

with the brute strength that can only be attributed to his Vegreville, Alberta roots.

Nicholl relates the story of the band's dramatic conception: "Me, Art and Zippy were all together, living in the same room. In order to get drinking money, we had to play in a band." Bergman adds: "I lived with these guys and wrote with these guys and started to think the same way. It's more than a band. We do things together." They signed up with Los Radicos Popularos in October of last year, and barely 12 months later, with a homemade single and a set of original tunes, they were here to

Popularize Toronto.

And they did so at a recent Domino Club gig. The performance had highs and lows, fortunately not in that order. At

the outset, some power-poppish songs failed to come across well because of the band's seeming coolness and disinterest in delivering the goods. At times one has the uncanny feeling that Los Popularos play for themselves, that the music is a private experience. In "Mystery to Myself", you can feel the anonymity and loneliness of the individual through a series of vague, haunting questions: "Who here sees you . . . Are you just like me . . . Are you waiting . . . It's a mystery to myself."

At first, Shirt displayed an ob-



vious air of inhibition, relying solely on aural talents, while guitarist Bergman was a prime photographic target; he didn't move a muscle. But later, Bergman melted, and the audience was allowed to share the rough excitement of his music. Then the band came alive.

When they lose that frigidatree look, they deliver the goods with a vengeance. When Shirt decides to let loose in "Fickle Flame", à la Peggy Lee, the audience is drawn to his sensual, romantic voice and flowing form. And when it comes to a more upbeat number, like "At the Top", the strengths of the band members show.

But Los Popularos is a definite misnomer—the band takes a conscious stand against conventional ideas of success and fame. They purposefully adopt an attitude of intellectual and musical aloofness toward the contemporary scene. "For the last five years there's been a lot of pap on the airwaves," Shirt explains. "If you listen to enough of that, it just drives you away." Their idea of success is having enough money for the next meal.

Says Art Bergman, "I like living on the razor's edge. It gives me a sense of adventure. I mean, who wants to be a crowd-pleaser or a press darling?" □



Liz Alt



Mike Thermen

Yorktones draw steel

Clifton Joseph

Since its inception in 1977 as a forum for the exposition and fostering of West Indian culture and talent, the Yorktones Steelband has taken its musical message to the Universities of Guelph, Trent and Waterloo, and to numerous locations throughout its home-base here at York. In Toronto it has amassed a respectable following, having played at an impressive array of events and locations including the International Year of the Child, the Parkdale Community Festival, York's Orientation Week, the Blockorama Summer Festival and Yorkwoods Library. Already for this school year it has played at Stong and Founders' orientations and at a noon-day concert in Central Square.

On Friday, October 16th, the band will play York again when they provide the momentous first-ever live musical entertainment for CYSF's Reel & Screen. The music will accompany a reggae twin-bill of *Rockers* and *Children of Babylon* and the excitement is brewing. "This is the first time we're having live music at our movies, and depending on the success, we might make it into a regular feature," says Reel & Screen co-ordinator Howard Hacker. "Originally, we were going to have recorded reggae, but when the Yorktones approached us we couldn't refuse—we've heard them play."

For the Yorktones, it will be yet another opportunity to display their repertoire and test their appeal. The band is confident, however, that it will meet with success. According to co-founder and past artistic director Ivor Picou, the Yorktones are no strangers to York audiences: "Over the past years we've gotten over many difficulties including changes in personnel, funding and acquiring new instruments. Now we've become an established part of the York community and there's plenty of student support."

This optimism is echoed with added resolve by current artistic director Tony Pierre: "This year we intend to become more well-known by becoming more involved, more visible, and more vocal here at York. We are willing to play more around campus and will be very aggressive in going after jobs. But we need money to run the Band," he continues. "Right now we have started a fund-raising campaign to cover the costs of buying new instruments and to help underwrite a trip to Trinidad."

Having set their goals for this year, the Yorktones Steelband is solidly on its way. In addition to Friday's show (Curtis L, 7:30 pm), on November 6 it will host a dance "Fall Chillout—Part II", at Bethune College Dining Hall, featuring Funky Ken, Galaxy 1000, and 1001 Disco Soul. □

Pixote: No hope in Hell

Mark Lewis

Pixote, now playing at the International Cinema, is a harrowing, haunting experience. In chronicling the corruption of a 10-year-old street boy by the socio-political reality of Brazil, the movie takes us into a world carefully hidden by postcards and travel folders. Director Hector Babenco, is out to expose the sordidness of this other Brazil, but in so doing he also explores, without oversentimentalization or pity, his characters' hold on humanity, the core from which they and the film get their strength.

Not since Frank Capra has a director so well mixed a political position with an intense regard for human beings. But while Capra believed in the system of his country, Babenco damns his outright. The young *Pixote* (played by the remarkable Fernando Ramos da Silva) hasn't got a hope in Hell, nor do the 3 million other poor, street-wandering children we are told of in the film. We follow *Pixote* through a reformatory, where he witnesses buggery, beatings and murder, escaping only through drugs and friendship, then into the world outside, where he and the surrogate family/gang he belongs to try to survive. By the film's end, *Pixote* is a thief and murderer, kicking a can along a railroad track toward an unknown and hopeless future.

While the plot is fictional, the problems *Pixote* depicts are not, and the sense of reality the film establishes by using actual street kids as its main actors gives it the power found in documentary. It is a film of the mind, the eye, and the heart, making full use of the medium's potential. *Pixote* should be seen by everyone interested in the movies, and by all those interested in their fellow human beings. □

Penguin Fax

If penguins' heads were removed, it would be difficult to distinguish between any of a dozen species! □



Teens beware: faulty chapsticks can cause embarrassment.

"Out at Sea" Political cannibals

Michael Monastyrskj

"Out at Sea", in the version presented this Saturday at Harbourfront, is a funny play whose overall message is blurred. The satire, written by Polish playwright Slawomir Mrozek, tells the story of three men stranded at sea and their attempts to create a society. In the process, social systems are put to the test and found wanting.

The play opens with the appearance on stage of three men in tuxedos. They contemplate their lack of food, and the Fat Castaway, played by Terence Slater, proposes that they eat the Thin Castaway (James Falcon). The Medium Castaway (William Devine) agrees and when Thin protests it is decided that the island is a democracy and an election will be held to choose the evening's meal. Following a bizarre campaign in which Thin is described as "warm-

hearted, devoted, and succulent", the election is declared invalid.

Throughout the one-act play Fat attempts to justify the choice of Thin as dinner, but he is continually foiled by unforeseen events. In this way, Fat's use of historical justice is proven to be as self-serving as his use of democracy.

The criticisms of specific political systems are clear and humorous. Good casting helps the play, but Harbourfront's Amsterdam Cafe made the production difficult to follow. As a result, much is lost and it is impossible to understand the work as a whole. Despite this major problem, "Out at Sea" is still well worth seeing.

(Paddle your way to Harbourfront at 12:10 p.m., Thurs. thru Sat., or Sunday at 11:10 a.m. or 12:10 p.m. Pay what you can.) □