

The Hot Rock has great humour

Fun in the tradition of Butch Cassidy

By LLOYD CHESLEY

The Hot Rock is out to out-slick The French Connection, and it does it by knowing its place. The French Connection never realized it was supposed to be a light action flick and contently tried to be heavy. If you want a heavy action film, try Dirty Harry, and you'll see why The French Connection could never reach what it thought it was after. The Hot Rock knows it is only out for fun.

The first thing they do is get a quick-witted writer and a dynamic director. William Goldman wrote Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid with a delightful light touch, which he has applied to this film quite nicely. Peter Yates started in England doing the Danger Man TV shows, and went to the States to do Bullit, which he did quite nicely. He doesn't waste a shot in this film and doesn't let a shot run away with the action.

The main thing to watch, of course, is the actors, and they load their hand with Robert Redford, who waltzes through his part, and George Segal who works as hard as ever, determined to be noticed (and I don't know why he never is).

The film has four suspense scenes, diving from one to the next, and if the characters never quite come alive, the action sure does. There are laughs thrown in and even an attempt, which almost looks self-mocking, to put in a "heavy" as their inept chase after a diamond becomes a vendetta for Redford.

But it was good, honest fun, and that's nice to see.



Andrew (George Segal) proudly shows his brother-in-law John (Robert Redford) and fellow thief how to pick a lock.

A novel by Matt Cohen

Crackle sings original and powerful

By JOHN OUGHTON

That merger of art and industry labelled as rock music, has always seemed a fertile field for exploration by contemporary novelists. Even after the recent tragic deaths of leading performers, tortured by their public lives, rock has remained largely untouched by writers of fiction, except at the grass-and-groupies level. Matt Cohen's new novel Johnny Crackle Sings ends this literary silence by endowing the moving paper and plastic fantasy of rock music, with a set of finely-drawn characters and situations.

This is not to imply that the novel is merely about the music scene. It is about people and their changes. As the tonality of the narrative ranges from free form thought flow to Canadian journalese, Cohen's style really does mirror the content; the modulations in novelistic approach, accompany and contrast with movements between characters and context. The novel follows Johnny Crackle's progress as he sings his way in and out of the Ottawa Valley and a small group of close friends. However, Cohen eschews conventional technique by opening and closing the novel with the story of how Johnny's friend Lew found his Sally, and stability, in the same moment. Like their farm, Lew and Sally are a steady beat of life against which Johnny's "crackle" — "I can play a thousand riffs and my body is a chemical rainbow" — flashes on and off.

Matt Cohen has made considerable progress as a stylist and delineator of human emotions since Korsoniloff, his first novel. Johnny Crackle Sings contains scenes of verbal brilliance and warm friendship which surpass the earlier work's somewhat arid intellectuality. It seems also to be a genuinely original work. Reading a book like Ondaatje's Billy The Kid, may have helped Cohen loosen up his use of form, and slip from prose into poetic lines and back with ease. Johnny Crackle Sings is not, however, hung up on one major image in the way that Ondaatje's book fastened on violence.

As a novel, J.C. Sings contains two

flaws. The first of these lies in the author's development of Johnny's character. As a central figure around which the other characters and some of the events in the novel circle, much in the way which Virginia Woolf used an often-absent hero in Jacob's Room, Crackle works well. The one element of Johnny's character which Cohen does not give us, and which is essential to the book's conception, is the exact tone of his music, whatever it is that he sings, and how he perceives or thinks that music. We

know that Johnny's music is, like Neil Young's, vaguely rock-folk. As a basically nonverbal, sensations rather than systems-type character, Johnny Crackle would have been strengthened for the reader by a description of his music a little deeper than "Johnny Crackle Sings twanged his electric guitar, and laid them out with that old Ottawa Valley rock star revolutionary 4/4 time."

The other reservation I have about the novel stems from an unnecessary addition rather than a missing factor. Near the end of the

narrative, Cohen briefly introduces us to Elmer, an up-and-coming young playwright. The three pages devoted to Elmer create a very good sketch, flavoured with nicely ironic phrases such as "Elmer was a self-conscious one-man vanguard of destiny." Perhaps Elmer, as the self-conscious literary performer, is meant as a sort of counterpoint to Johnny. Unlike all the other characters and scenes in the novel, Elmer has no apparent relation to Johnny, and although one admires the technique with which he is

portrayed, the question of the reason for his inclusion hangs in the air after the novel ends.

Despite these criticisms, I found the novel enjoyable and engrossing. The descriptions of Johnny's experiences with drugs and catatonia are among the best which have appeared in recent fiction. The novel proves that Cohen is more than just another promising young writer. With a little more of the control experience brings, he may well produce some great Canadian novels.

Most simplistic music ever

Fun House — buy this one for sure gang

By STEVEN DAVEY

Fun House, the Stooges (Elektra 74071) is an album for the very brave. Released over a year ago, Fun House possesses all the subtlety of a transport truck. Led by a singer (?) named Iggy Pop, this Ann Arbour band makes some of the most simplistic music ever. Each song is based on one chord (They're all in 'E' if you're playing along, kids). They have, in Ron Ashton, one of the worst guitar players ever. They are loud and boring and theatrical (Iggy knocks himself unconscious with a mike) and great! Especially killer are TV Eye and LA Blues, which is six minutes of feedback with Iggy moaning in the background. If you like MC5 or the Velvet Underground or early Doors, you'll like the Stooges. I recommend it to any one who likes to dance. Hot stuff ... Buy this one, gang!

Hunky Dory, David Bowie (RCA 4623). David Bowie looks exactly like Lauren Bacall, which, I guess, is someone to look like if you have to make a decision. This is Bowie's fourth album, and probably the best all around. The songs (especially Life on Mars, Andy Warhol, and The Bewlay Brothers) show Bowie as not only a first class composer and lyricist, but also, an interesting singer. His voice twists and rips against the melody. A very good record, not at all in the James Taylor-Steven Stills mould. I give it an 84.

Nod Is As Good As A Wink, the Faces (Warner Bros.). Here we have the Faces' third new phase album, and Rod Stewart's ninth or tenth, and the edges are beginning to wear thin. The exuberance initially shown on the Faces' album, First Step, has turned into boredom. Half of the songs try to sound like the Stones, notably, Stay With Me, and the other half of the songs sound like the group fell asleep in the middle of them. Memphis is particularly poor.

Rod Stewart is relying too much on his image, and not enough on his voice. Dull, dull. The Faces may be having a good time, but they're not playing very good music. Better luck, next time boys.

Greatest Hits, Vol. 2, The Temptations (Motown 954). About two years ago the Temptations changed from a run of the mill soul band (remember My Girl?), into an exciting, dynamic group more along the lines of Sly and the Family Stone

than the Supremes. Included in this collection of their newest hits is the original I Know I'm Losing You and Rare Earth that Rod Stewart recently brought to fame. Listening to the Temptations' lead singer, David Ruffin, it becomes very clear where Stewart nicked his gravelly voice. Also included, are their hits, Cloud Nine, I Can't Get Next To You (recently revamped by Savoy Brown), and the ridiculous Psychedelic Shack. Great!

Play to be staged for the benefit of Pollution Probe

By LYNN SLOTKIN

Apathy appears to be a way of life with a lot of students at York. Their main activity seems to be cluttering up the various cafeterias and common rooms with their garbage. Mary Bismayer and some friends are different.

At the end of February, next year, Miss Bismayer will direct a student production of the Broadway play, The Apple Tree. It will be presented for four nights. The proceeds will then be given to Pollution Probe for its various projects. She says, "I feel that theatre is not an end in itself, but is part of the total life of people. Pollution should be a concern of everyone to-day. I hope the proceeds

from this play will help the fight against pollution."

The main problem is to acquire the funds to put on the play. Miss Bismayer says she needs \$1,000, most of which goes to copyright costs. She has raised most of it. Founders College contributed \$100 on the condition that she use

Founders students in the production. However, Miss Bismayer is short of her goal by \$175. She hopes there will be an interest, especially to help raise the remaining money. If anyone is interested in the project, please contact Mary Bismayer at 233-7996. Maybe the apathetic way of life will disappear.

Staff meets
today at 2 pm