

## Arts cont'd

# savage shanley and lonely virgins

by J.A. Stephan

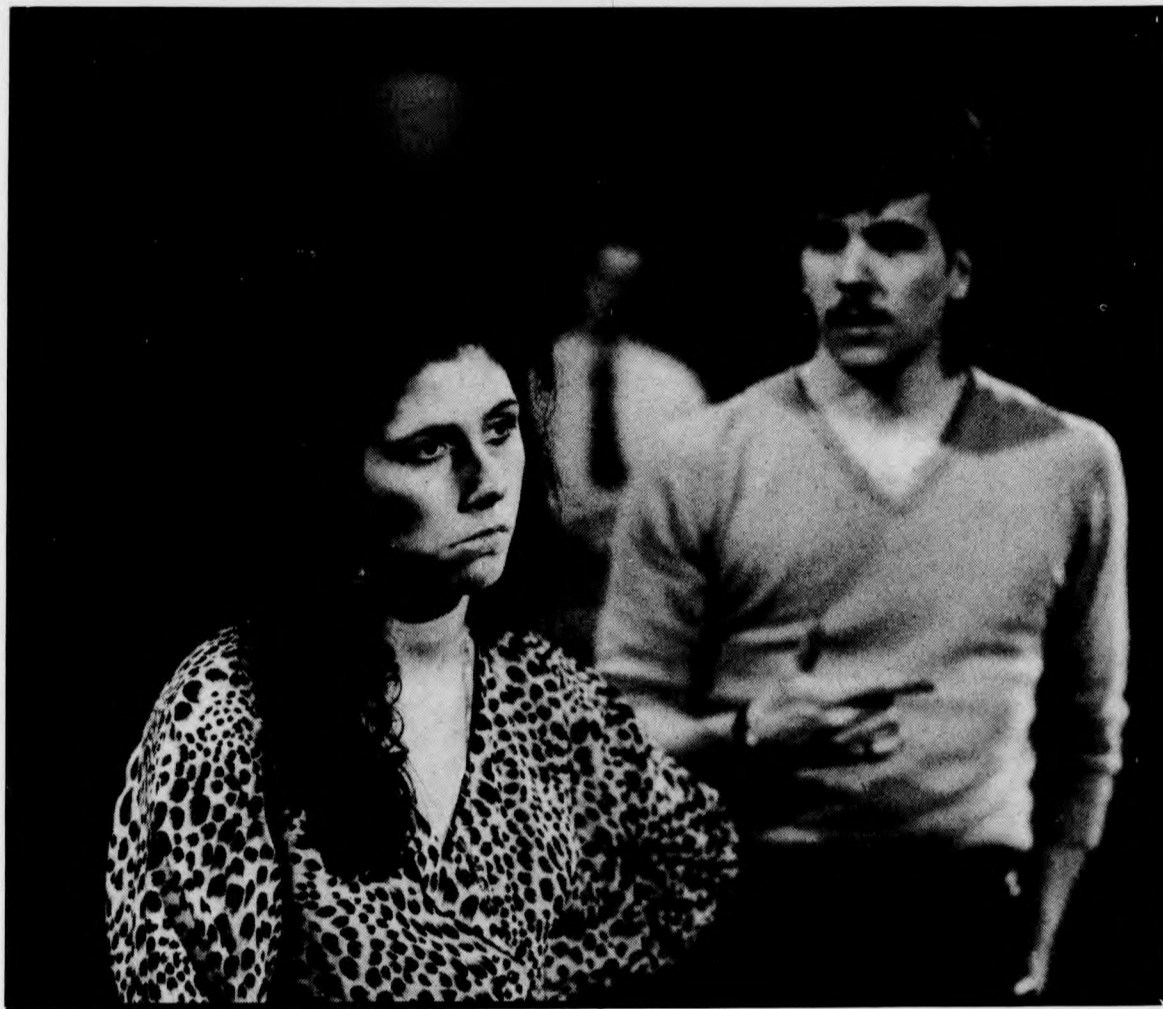
*Savage in Limbo*  
directed by Linda Matassa  
Palmerston Library Theatre

Virgins be forewarned, 32-year-old Denise Savage says that the life of one untouched is an unbearably lonely existence. In fact, all five of the characters in the ACME Theatre's production of John Patrick Shanley's *Savage in Limbo* are pathetically alone and awfully depressed about it. Why else would they be hanging out at a sad little Bronx bar on a Monday night?

Their interchange resembles a raucous game of bumper cars, without the laughs. Savage (Naïalie Breton) begins the contest by admitting her virginity to Linda (Jane Miller), who is in tears over her boyfriend's attraction to ugly women. Tony (Dean Gabourie), the stud of the neighbourhood, has turned away from Linda to satisfy an aching need for change.

Holding onto her virginity as both power and penance, Savage gropes for Tony like a drowning victim for rescue. Linda plays interference in an attempt to salvage her relationship and achieve domesticity.

Never advancing too close to the battle lines is Murk (Dwayne Stevenson), a stuck-in-the-mud, tight-lipped bartender; and April



In the play *Savage in Limbo*, Dean Gabourie (r) plays the neighbourhood stud who devastates Jane Miller's hopes of marriage.

(Norah Grant), a bleary-eyed alcoholic on the edge of madness. For these two nothing ever changes but the days of the week.

There is ample talk packed into this hour and a quarter drama. Often the actors cannot make the dialogue their own. The play-

right is ever present in long-winded, preachy speeches and the character's introspective articulations sound prepared.

But, they are well acted, with stand-out performances by both Grant and Gabourie, for the naturalness of their executions.

The play's success in Toronto will be encouraged by the current celebrity of its author. John Patrick Shanley is making his directorial debut with his screenplay, *Joe Versus the Volcano*.

After barely getting by playwrighting for off-Broadway productions, Shanley first attempted screenwriting with *Five Corners*. The big break came by way of *Moonstruck* which won him an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay.

In a recent interview in American Film Shanley said, "Whatever you do in terms of telling a story, the most important thing that you can define is who you are. . . . I write about whatever my problems are. . . ." *Savage in Limbo* was born out of his intense feelings of isolation.

Dean Gabourie, founder of the ACME Theatre Company, selected this piece because of his enthusiasm and respect for the author. Not one to wait for the phone to ring, this enterprising young actor raised the money himself to finance the production. The synthesis of cast and crew came easy, and the synergistic effect has kept Gabourie in hyperdrive. With such a leader at the helm, ACME has a bright future.

*Savage in Limbo* will run to March 10 at the Palmerston Library Theatre. For information call 538-4087.



## dogs, cats and common sense

by Brian Tait

Bob Wiseman Sings Wrench Tuttle  
In Her Dream  
Risque Disque

You simply have to love an album that claims that although recorded on state-of-the-art digital and laser equipment, "certain hisses and noise were later intentionally recorded onto some of the songs in certain places so that it would give the listener that it-musta-been-done-on-an-old-eight-track-with-cheap-microphones feeling."

Apparently the story behind the album goes something like this: Wiseman (better known for his keyboard work in Blue Rodeo) takes poems by Wrench Tuttle, "poet, traveller, activist and philosopher," and puts them to music. The socio-political focus of Tuttle's work is remarkably fresh, he chooses to come at the issues in an unconventional fashion which provides a nice change from the cut-and-dry

formula perpetuated by so many performers over the past few years.

Songs like "No Commotion" (concerning the Rainbow Warrior affair) evoke the listener to join in the thought process: "Somebody planted a bomb, I wonder who it could be, I wonder who would profit from, Greenpeace not getting out to sea."



Although the album is generally depressing, Tuttle's humorous side comes through in songs such as "Dog on a Leash" and "Airplane on the Highway." Humour, in good taste, is quite effective in bolstering the overall impression made by *In Her Dream*.

Musically, the album is an

eclectic mixture of folk, blues, country, bluegrass, etc., undoubtedly the result of the impressive collection of talent Wiseman brought together in the making of *In Her Dream*. Included in this list of 30 collaborators is Mary Margaret O'Hara, Graeme Kirkland (who appears to always be turning 22), Hugh Manoid, Hugh Phillips, Andy and Andriko Stochansky and Pat, Laura and Jack of Leslie Spit Treo.

*In Her Dream's* liner notes show the use of a variety of strange instruments; dogs and cats on one cut and the often neglected instrument 'common sense' on another. You get the idea.

## spirit of the west moves to accessibility

by Brian Tait

Spirit of the West  
Save This House  
WEA Records

I remember Spirit of the West as being one of the hardest working bands in Vancouver's burgeoning folk scene around 1985-86. It seemed you could always catch them, in whole or in part, playing their modern blend of traditional/Celtic folk on the Vancouver bar circuit centred around "The Savoy" and the "Railway Club."

Although the band was relatively unknown away from the West coast in those days, there was something about Spirit of the West that suggested longevity. Last year's sold-out performance at the Diamond Club proves the band outlived the bevy of "weekend" acts that surfaced at the same time. Spirit of the West are finally reaping the rewards for their many years of obscurity.



The recent arrival of their fourth lp, *Save this House*, picks up where *Labour Day* left off. At the same time, this new album shows a band in transition. The move to a major label does not seem to have affected the artistic freedom of the band, especially

in terms of lyrical focus. Songs like "Dirty Pool" (concerning the Valdez affair), "Not Just a Train" (a lament for Canada's railway), and "Wrecking Ball" carry on the band's tradition of social and political awareness.

The evolution of this band is easily traced through their vinyl. There has been a gradual move towards a bigger, almost more accessible sound. The larger audiences could not have been inconsequential to the making of *Save This House*. The album reflects a further move towards a more mainstream sound.

Although hinted at in interviews, the band has fortunately chosen not to add drums to their regiment. This latest offering is undeniably more upbeat than past efforts, but they still manage to remain in that 'acquired taste' category even if signals point to more change in the future.

If the album suffers from anything, it is the unfortunate luck of following in the footsteps of *Tripping up the Stairs* (1986), by far their best effort to date. This is not to belittle *Save This House*, it is a good album.

But, it is not the epitome of greatness (sic) that early songs like "Rocks at Thieves Bay," "The Mists of Crofton" and "Homelands" were. Either I am stuck in the past or this gradual evolution is for the better. The issue is up for discussion.