

Jazz cooks under pressure

Sheila Jordan and Steve Kuhn at the Palms Cafe to January 17

review by Michael Skeet

The Steve Kuhn - Sheila Jordan Band opened a five-night stand at the Palms on Tuesday. I'm almost led to suggest the survivors be given medals.

It was an evening that had a little bit of everything. The show started 90 minutes late. At the scheduled starting time of 9:00, it was discovered that somebody had forgotten to have the piano tuned. The sound check was done concurrently with the show. One couple walked out after handing Jordan a note accusing the band of unprofessional conduct. And one bozo up front gave loud voice to his enthusiasm — about every four bars. Yes, at times the whole thing appeared to be an audition for Major Bose's Amateur Hour.

The band, by the way, deserves a great deal of credit for simply performing. In a situation ripe for prima-donna behavior, all four handled themselves very well. They had been on the go since 4:30 a.m. Tuesday, and what with jet lag, the fact that they didn't get to the Palms until 8:00 p.m., and the much delayed starting time, one could have forgiven them easily had they decided enough was enough and gone to bed after the first number.

That they didn't was a credit to the band, and resulted in a strange and wonderful evening for the 70-odd first-nighters. The music started off strongly with Jordan singing a clipped, syncopated *I Remember You*. Unfortunately, sound troubles reared up at this point, and the next two songs were somewhat raggedly played, as the musicians discovered they couldn't hear themselves on their monitors.

Things were cleared up in time for two great pieces, an instrumental called *Fruit Fly* from the *Non-Fiction* album on ECM, and an amazing 30-minute version of Miles Davis' *Little Willie Leaps* which paid tribute to Charlie Parker and featured some wonderful bop phrasing.

There's little doubt that Sheila Jordan is the focal point of the band, whether she admits it or not. The thing that impresses me most is her ability to wrap herself around a song with deceptive ease, making it her own. And this is how she sounds when she's tired!

I would have preferred that Steve Kuhn get a bit more of the spotlight; neither he nor Stanley Cowell with the Heath Brothers got enough solo work. Kuhn's reputation and ability would seem to justify more of the fine work he did with *Fruit Fly*, a lovely, rollicking piece that may have been the best of the night.

For me, the real highlight of the evening was the performance given by bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Bob 'Duck' Moses. Both gentlemen were relative unknowns to me before Tuesday evening, and both showed a great deal of imagination and humor in their solo work, and well as giving strong showings in ensemble.

When this is printed, three shows will remain in the Kuhn-Jordan stand — I intend to catch several of them. It's a treat to see a band with the reputation this one enjoys, having a good time. Showtime is 9:00 p.m. at The Palms, 10010 - 102 St.



Sheila Jordan and Steve Kuhn performing at the Palms Cafe.

photo Ray Giguere

This co-production with the Edmonton Jazz Society marks the re-entry of The Palms into the Bigtime of jazz production. I hope the lessons of this Tuesday have been committed to memory, to avoid a repetition of what could have been a disaster.

It's unfortunate that the next

major show scheduled for The Palms won't be coming off — Billy Harper decided the cost of airfare makes a trip to Edmonton uneconomical. Accordingly, his February date is cancelled. There's still hope that Betty Carter will be able to make it here though. Edmonton certainly deserves it.

Creeps

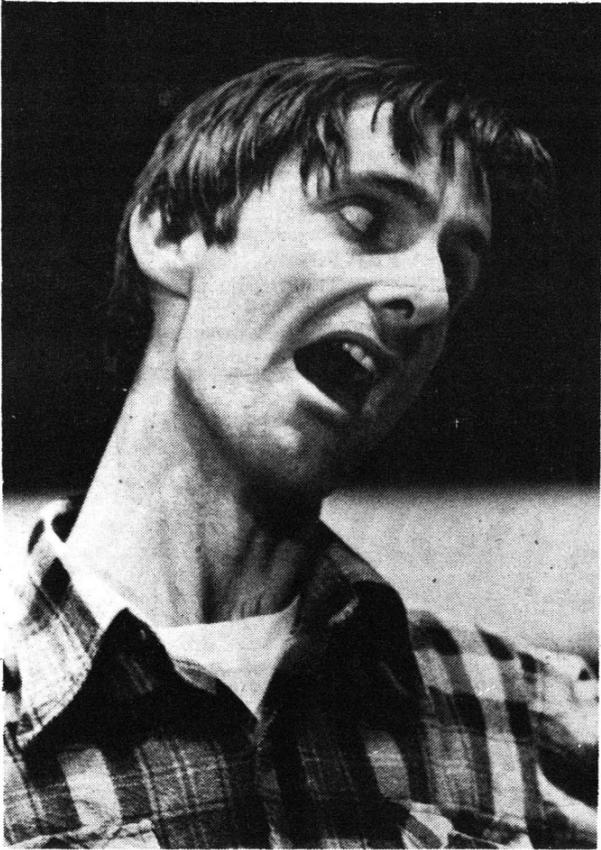


photo Ray Giguere

This man stars in the David Freeman drama *CREEPS*, produced by Workshop West and playing at Theatre 3 until January 18. The play, which won the Chalmers Award for best Canadian play in 1972, depicts handicapped men who must come to terms with society, as it must with them.

Minds intelligent

by Doug Spaner

I have often wondered what it was like to see the Beatles back in the early days of Liverpool and Hamburg. But perhaps seeing the Modern Minds in concert today gives one an inkling of how it must have been. The Minds have the same sort of intangible quality that can make you feel good just hearing them and dancing to their beat.

Their music is raw and energetic, yet melodic and rhythmic. It possesses a quality apparently taboo in most rock music today — intelligence.

The band played at the Riviera Rock Room last weekend, a spot which normally showcases out-of-town acts with major recording contracts — but the trio certainly didn't suffer by comparison.

Their cover versions of hits by the early Who, Kinks, and even Jimi Hendrix and the Supremes have a fresh, distinctive sound.

But their original songs, which by now comprise over half their material, are even more impressive. Singer/songwriter

Moe Berg strikes an Elvis Costello-like figure with his thin frame and thick glasses. And he possesses a Costello-like wit when it comes to writing.

His subject material is wide-ranging — from unrequited love (*Theresa's World*), to rape (*The Fear Begins*), to the murder of Playboy Playmate, Dorothy Stratton (*The End of a Dream*). In each song the angry eloquence of the lyrics is embellished by powerful, yet catchy melodies.

I have the feeling this band's

potential runs far beyond the local scene. I guess a band has to be in the right place at the right time to really take off. But if talent has anything at all to do with it, (and with some of the groups I see getting recording contracts today, I really wonder sometimes), then the Modern Minds deserve the chance to be heard by a lot more people.

The Modern Minds will be playing at Dinwoodie Friday night. This may be their last public appearance for some time as their colorful bass guitarist, Bobby Drysdale, is leaving the band. A replacement has yet to be found.

Their first release, a single entitled *Theresa's World*, is on sale at SU Records.

aboutroundaboutround

by Michael Dennis Skeet

I gotta stop doing this column at 3:00 a.m.; I'm beginning to hallucinate. I just saw Davey Jones and Mickey Dolenz forming a kickline with Barry Manilow and Neil Diamond.

The record industry seems to have stopped to catch its breath following the pre-Christmas blitz; a trickle of releases continues, but there's little to scream about. My Highly Informed Source (Dave Ward, the Singing Cabbie) tells me the latest Clash LP, a triple-decker entitled *Sandinista* should be here late this month or early next.

Borderline
by Cooder
(Warners WB 56864)

There's something about *Borderline*, Ry Cooder's new album (Warners WB56 864) that disturbs me. Ideally, it should fit nicely with his most recent work, as exemplified by 1979's *Bop Till You Drop*. In this case, though, the ideal isn't reached. *Bop* was characterized by an energetic, good-time sound. It was a lively album that easily weaned the listener away from Cooder's older, acoustic style. *Borderline* is a bit like last night's champagne — it

may have had something going for it once, but by the time we get around to it it's gone flat.

This is what's confusing. The personnel haven't changed that much from the group that recorded *Bop* (an exception being the addition of Angry Young Guitarist John Hiatt), and the songs are either good *Crazy 'bout an Automobile*, *Never Make Your Move Too Soon*, or at least interesting relics (634-5789, *Down in the Boondocks*). So where does it go wrong?

I don't quite know, and that's what disturbs me. It may be too easy to say that Cooder and his

sidemen aren't showing enough spirit here, but that's the only answer that fits. I can't justify panning the record, so let's just give it a qualified caveat. I'll keep listening and if I change my mind (something that's been known to happen), I'll let you know.

Off the Coast of Me
Kid Creole and the Coconuts
(ZE Records ZEA 33-010)

On and off for the past year, I've heard rumours suggesting that the Big Band Sound was on the verge of a resurgence. I'm not talking about Chicago here, I'm

referring to the bands that made the Golden Age of Swing Swing — Artie Shaw, the Dorseys, Goodman, Bunny Berrigan, Earl Hines, et al. While nothing has turned up yet (and indeed big bands may prove too expensive and unwieldy in this day and age), at least one aspect of the Big Band Era is paid tribute to in a recording entitled *Off the Coast of Me* by Kid Creole and the Coconuts. (ZE Records ZEA-33-010)

The whimsical vocal stylings of 1930's pop are resurrected and updated by August Darnell and

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