

## Decidedly Jazz focuses on innovation

Interview by Rosa Jackson

When most people think of jazz dancing, images of sexy scantily clad Solid Gold dancers come to mind. But as Michele Moss, the ebullient co-founder and principal dancer of Calgary-based Decidedly Jazz Danceworks put it: "Solid Gold dancers are good at what they do; they're flexible, they move beautifully — but they are not jazz dancers."

And Moss should know. Her company's mandate is "to educate, to promote and to preserve the rich history of jazz dance." This means tracing its North American and African roots, and choreographing their numbers to traditional jazz music as opposed to today's pop hits. What are the advantages of this approach? "It allows for a full range of movement and emotion," says Moss, adding that humor is especially important.

The creative force behind this energetic group of dancers is choreographer Vicki Adams Willis. "She has a head full of ideas," enthuses Moss. "She never runs out of inspiration. When we're working on a new piece she has us improvise and we add to the inspiration, but she's the sculptor."

"How many people have jobs doing concert work?"

With a \$189,000 grant from Canadian Job Strategy and Development this year towards a new "incredible, expansive training schedule" which will involve two male apprentices, Willis's creativity will be put to good use. Being a part of Decidedly Jazz is a full-time occupation for all its members. "We're run ragged," says Moss. Their daily routine includes aerobics, singing, ballet, weight training, and Indian Classical dance, to name but a few of their pursuits.

This is the first season in which male dancers have been added to the company, but Moss feels that "it is the number, rather than the sex" which will make the difference. "There are only so many configurations of six women," she says. "Men traditionally have been the lifters, but that's not true any more. A man shouldn't be on stage just as a lifter. He has to have the technique, and he has to have the groove in him."

The Decidedly Jazz dancers will have the chance to prove once again that they have

the groove in them with their latest production, *Peripheral Visions*, which is coming to SUB Theatre October 23 and 24. They have previously appeared in Edmonton at the Fringe Festival and at Dance Extravaganza, where they were received with enthusiasm and admiration.

*Peripheral Visions* is a departure from their last two shows, which had running themes. It is made up of five distinctive pieces, all choreographed by Willis with the exception of the last one, which is by Denise Clarke, recipient of an Olympic Arts Calgary Commission. "The first piece is new. It's about busi-

nessmen and things like that," says Moss. "It's very abstract but it's quite wonderful."

The second, a solo, is a remount of a piece that Willis performed at the University of Calgary. Donna Larson will be dancing to the singing of Lana Skaug. "She has an incredibly powerful voice," says Moss. The piece is about the now familiar superwomen, "people who just do a million things in one day." "Sophisticated Ladies' Suite," previously seen in Edmonton at Dance Extravaganza in the spring, is back "by popular demand" in this show. The last two pieces are Moss' personal favorites. "Ichnochasm" was performed this year at the Dance in Canada Conference, and Denise Clarke's new piece is "a rock video using the progression of jazz to what we see today."

This exuberant group of dancers have no plans to slow down their pace at all this year.

power of our live performances.

Ted: More balls.

Todd: Yeah. Basically it was an incredible learning experience.

Gateway: What about production? Would you hire a producer next time?

John: Yeah, well the way to go is to have a producer or a co-producer who knows you. What happens is, you get nit-picking about the way to do things and nothing gets done. A producer could come in and say "Let's do it this way" and give some direction.

Gateway: What suggestions would you give a band just about to start their first studio session?

Upangys (all at the same time if not in unison): Kick ass. Pick your songs carefully. Get pissed.

Ted: Go with what you think is right. What else are you going to do?

Todd: And don't let your drummer drink.

John: Yeah. Don't drink and drum.

The Upangybottoms are performing at The Ship Oct. 22, 23 & 24 and with the Spoons at the Convention Centre Oct. 31.

John: The hardest part is going around to record stores and trying to get them to sell the album. Getting the money can be a hassle too.

Todd: The problem with our band is sche-

duling our lives. There is so much to do with going to school and stuff. I graduate in December so I will be able to concentrate more on the band and help out. That is if John will let me. (He laughs).

Obviously one of the most important aspects of promoting an album is performing live, and Ted explained the Upangy's theory of live performances.

Ted: What's important is having a good time. Believe me if the crowd isn't having fun, neither are we. The people don't come out to see us pretend we're big rock stars, they come out to have a good fucking time. Our job is to give them a good fucking show.

John: Yeah. The whole essence of playing live is that it's dangerous.

Todd: Yeah especially with us.

Gateway: What did you like and dislike about Upangymania?

John: I would have liked more raunchiness to come across in our album. I'm happy with our song writing, and I'm happy with our performances but it would have been nicer if we could get across some of the

## The Upangybottoms talk

Interview by Wayne Allen

Todd Lee, John Barry, and Ted Forbyth make up the Edmonton trio, the Upangybottoms. Having been together for two years now, they have released their first album: *Upangymania*. My interview, at Dewey's, was an unstructured affair full of fascinating topics like acidwash underwear. The main motivating influence that brought the group together was their common love of chicks, cheese and beer; the driving force behind their rock and roll, as their record sleeve states. The pub in HUB seemed like the appropriate place. Although there was no cheese in sight there was plenty of beer. There were some chicks around but Ted, the drummer, managed to scare most of them away.

Gateway: How did you get started on your album? Say, financing for example?

Todd: We were approached by a guy (record co. rep.) who could finance the album reasonably. It didn't take a massive infusion of cash immediately.

After getting the financing arranged and the songs written and ready it was just a matter of going to the studio and recording, right? Well not really.

Todd: We spent way too much time to put the album together. I was still in school, and Ted and John were working. An hour here, two or three hours there. Next time we are going to go in and book 12 hour blocks, and try and get the album done in 10 days or 2 weeks. It will allow us to get more focus in the album.

John: The hardest part is going around to record stores and trying to get them to sell the album. Getting the money can be a hassle too.

Todd: The problem with our band is sche-

duling our lives. There is so much to do with going to school and stuff. I graduate in December so I will be able to concentrate more on the band and help out. That is if John will let me. (He laughs).

Obviously one of the most important aspects of promoting an album is performing live, and Ted explained the Upangy's theory of live performances.

Ted: What's important is having a good time. Believe me if the crowd isn't having fun, neither are we. The people don't come out to see us pretend we're big rock stars, they come out to have a good fucking time. Our job is to give them a good fucking show.

John: Yeah. The whole essence of playing live is that it's dangerous.

Todd: Yeah especially with us.

Gateway: What did you like and dislike about Upangymania?

John: I would have liked more raunchiness to come across in our album. I'm happy with our song writing, and I'm happy with our performances but it would have been nicer if we could get across some of the

## WRITING COMPETENCE PETITIONS: NOTICE TO STUDENTS

This notice is intended for students who have not met the University's writing competence requirement and whose deadline for meeting that requirement occurs January 1, 1988. Students who do not pass the writing competence test by their deadline will have their registrations cancelled prior to the start of classes unless granted an extension by the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee (WCPC).

If your deadline is January 1, 1988 and you plan to register in the Winter term or in a subsequent session, you may petition the WCPC in November provided that you are currently registered and have written the writing competence test at least once.

Students are urged to seek advice on preparing their writing competence petitions. Such advice can be sought from the Student Ombudsmen, Room 278, Students' Union Building (432-4689). The Student Adviser's Office (300 Athabasca Hall) is offering information seminars on preparing petitions; call 432-4145 for dates and times or for an information pamphlet.

The regulations and procedures used by the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee are available in either of the above-noted offices.

Petitions must be received in the University Secretariat, 2-5 University Hall, by Thursday, November 5, 1987, 4:30 p.m.

**"EDMONTON'S MOST UNUSUAL & EXCITING" NIGHT CLUB**

**EVERY WEDNESDAY IS STUDENT NIGHT**

- Free Pizza
- 2 for 1 Drink Specials
- No Cover Charge
- with a Student I D Card

For Reservations call  
**438-5573**

Redeem this coupon for  
**TWO FREE ADMISSIONS**

