

Don't Touch the Paintings

by Leonard Mackey

The Dalhousie Art Gallery was a total environment for Ellen Pierces' *Piece for Louis Comtois*. The three evenings were a delightful and intriguing combination of dance, music, theatre, paintings and mime. One's senses are not often affected in such a dazzling array. The great strength of the performance was the unique blending of all these forms.

Louis Comtois should be smiling and for those who were unmoved or somewhat puzzled by his work, the evening was a course in creative response. It's regrettable the performance ended just two days before the end of the Gallery Show. I think many would have liked to return with totally new feelings and do their own dance for Louis Comtois. That testifies as much as anything else to the success of the perfor-

mance.

We descend the stairs, underground, to where? A haunting revery carries us along from each of the five different locations used. A sound of gurgling water, reminiscent of underground caverns, is mingled throughout the traveling music, a stream carrying us to where? The taped music and sound, as well as live instrumentation by Steve Tittle and Paul Theberge wonderfully evoked the mood for each piece. All the various pieces: music, movement, and art blended so well to a unison.

In the first piece Ellen introduces a different evening of dance. A fast energetic running settles to a woman seeing/hearing visions: Angel with paper wings, the woman in the grey dress, riding a horse. Comtois' *Maki*, evocative grey, purple on the wall in close proximity to the movements and action evoked by the piece itself. Art and a rendering taking place together! Tending toward dementia she often stops, asking "Who's there?" In the close confines of the art gallery, Ellen's continual facial emo-

tions are most effective and are an important part of the performance.

In each of the five pieces, Ellen plays with the idea of Don't Touch The Paintings. Just one of a hopeless morass of **DON'TS** we encounter during our whole life. So this character is playing with the idea of ignoring the don'ts, of trespassing. At times it seems representative of rational sanity (rules, don't) vs. irrational insanity, where one ignores those or isn't even aware of them. Also it sometimes seems to be an aesthetic wrestling, how to respond, varying from Don't Touch The Paintings to becoming one with the painting.

The second stop is *Distortion in Green*. Ellen, an envious clown, attempts her own painting, first to be herself a painting, and then to hang one herself on the gallery wall. She was a delightful imp, working with the audience, who play a much larger role than in any other piece. Ellen uses the range of body emotions throughout the five pieces. Again there is a Don't Touch The Paintings sequence.

The third piece returns us somewhat to the woman of the first. In a full length shimmering "cold" silver dress, the woman often utters "What do they say?" At moments it seems she may go mad, and here we are trapped in this cellar with her. Continual whispering, such a gleam in her eye, tea time, civilization is not conducive to mental health.

The fourth finds Ellen walking the line of sanity/insanity, mad laughter throughout, teetering at times towards the paintings. Or is she only playing? Don't Touch The Paintings!

The final piece a very catching slow motion run has Ellen determined to break through, or away? Her steady stare set on something, striving to get there. Is she rushing towards?—maybe breaking through Don't Touch The Paintings—maybe she's there on the wall in one of these paintings. If you walk back through she is still there, a spirit inhabiting these irresistible colors and if you stop to dwell a bit you'll pass through hers and find your own.

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Split yet impressive

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Review: *Split Enz—True Colours* (A&M SP-4822)

From the rather cute band name, to the trendy-looking inner sleeve photographs of the band members, to the laser etched design on the record itself, this debut album is an effective, slickly-produced package. It is attractive to look at, but also, fortunately, impressive to hear.

Split Enz is an Australian band, and this record has already enjoyed number one status in that country. It probably won't do as well in Canada, but this band should attract many new fans. Its music has the same clean production and good ensemble playing that characterized the *Boomtown Rats'* last record. In fact, *True Colours* is at times quite reminiscent of the *Rats*, and also the *Cars*, but it seems to resemble most the dance-band and beach party pop of the 1960's. *Split Enz* is not humorous or parodistic like the *B-52's*, however. It is a quite serious-minded band, and this record contains some

of the most evocative organ-playing I've heard since Elvis Costello's "This Year's Model." True, the keyboard-and-percussion-flavoured 1960's style pop can be a bit overbearing at times (especially on side one), but this album contains a great deal more, from a very lovely ballad to some spacey synthesizer work to some very up-to-date new-wave pop. Besides, there isn't a dull track among the eleven songs, which include two instrumentals.

The songs are, on the whole, sung quite clearly, but I wish a lyric sheet had been included with the record. The lyrics, which are clever and unsentimental, are largely concerned with a sort of paranoid alienation. They have a nice sense of irony, although it is never as sharp or angry as Elvis Costello's. Most of the songs treat this paranoid alienation in terms of a man-woman relationship, with the man as the victim of an insensitive woman with whom he is obsessed. The best song in this group is the

band's current single, "I Got You." There is a nice quirkiness to its lead vocal, some good subtle harmonizing, and a crisp instrumental break.

Two of the album's strongest songs move this theme into a broader social spectrum. In "Missing Person", the narrator wants to divorce himself from an uncaring society, and in "Nobody Takes Me Seriously", a man suffers ridicule and inattention at work and in his relationships. "If there was fire they'd just leave me to burn," he sings, "I don't want to suffer these conditions no more." This song, with its convincing defiant stance and strong, danceable melody, is perhaps the album's best track.

One of the most fascinating numbers is "The Choral Sea." An experimental instrumental, its introduction reminds me of Pink Floyd's "You Better Run", from "The Wall." Synthesizers create a rich, sweeping, very sea-like atmosphere, with an undercurrent evocative of the desperation which has characterized much of the album. The track, created by the band as a whole, is like a theme song to end the set.

"True Colours" is a promising debut. The singing is very expressive, and always appropriate to the music. I suspect that *Split Enz* is a band with a broad base of musical knowledge. If this band can build upon the framework this record has established, *Split Enz's* true colours should develop into very interesting tones and shadings by their second album.

Fall Term

General Registration
Thursday,
September 18, 1980
5:00-6:30 p.m.
Saturday,
September 20, 1980
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

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