

# OFFICE works overtime:

Feature interview by Dave Cox

On a bright and cold afternoon in downtown Edmonton, I am headed for an interview. A sleepy-eyed Vincent Evans answers the door of his walk-up, second-floor home. Vincent is a guitarist and vocalist in Office, one of Edmonton's foremost alternative bands.

Office have been called "A dance band for the thinking man," "aggressive and amusing," "background music for a nightmare—chilling and full of dire suggestiveness," "mean, almost psychopathic," but with a "satirical, art school humor." They are all that and more.

We enter a room designed for comfort—a big comfy couch; lots of records and an adequate stereo system, thousands of books. The walls bear Vincent's own paintings—one marvelous semi-abstract piece, "I did that when I was fifteen."

In contrast to the journal picture of him, Vincent is wearing a grubby, disheveled sweatshirt. He is candid, as always, "I look like a fucking mess because I've got this cold that everybody else has."

He lives with Barbara, his girlfriend of three years. I was specifically requested not to mention anything about the abundance of Smurfs and associated paraphernalia.

His voice contains a trace of his birthplace: Southend on Sea, Essex, England. All opinions are merely those of Vincent, as rendered by myself.

**Dave:** What are the interests and talents of Office?

**Vincent:** The band started last year in February. Phil Young was the original drummer, he and I found Jeff and Malcolm. Office had previous incarnations. Jeff appears to be more interested in music than in politics, Phil is virtually equally as interested in social and political things as I am, Malcolm takes a closer interest in cultural things. Malcolm is much more of an aesthete.

**Dave:** You're interested in other forms of art; you read, write and produce art. What other artists influence you?

**Vincent:** A lot of writers' books provide source material for ideas or quotes for lines I use in my songs. I also write short stories, some fairly simplistic science fiction. I do that mainly as a grammatical exercise. I would eventually like to write a book.

**Dave:** Science fiction?

**Vincent:** Some will probably call it science fiction. I wouldn't. A particular favorite author of mine is Phillip K. Dick. Previous to his death, I had been communicating with him, and we had developed a fairly close rapport. Another science fiction writer I admire is J.G. Ballard. I also like William Burroughs, James Joyce, Anthony Burgess. I just read *The Ministry of Fear* by Graham Greene, which was good.

I haven't really kept up with my painting. I did a lot when I was around fifteen. I do most of the artwork on our posters, our album sleeve, the press kit. My three favorite pastimes are listening to records, reading books and going to movies.

I love movies, I like meaty, substantial films. I've become very interested in foreign films lately.

**"We're approaching a major social upheaval...within the next four to fifteen years"**

**Dave:** What styles of music that you listen to influence your experimentation?

**Vincent:** Many forms—I appreciate fusion jazz, electronic music. I prefer, say, Vangelis—I was listening to Vangelis before *Chariots of Fire*. I listen to a fair amount of classical music, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Handel's Messiah. I listen to some old heavy metal, some new

heavy metal for fun. The new KISS album is fun. It's to put on when you don't want to think.

Mostly, I listen to bands that are termed "Cold Wave." My five favorite bands now in no particular order are Bauhaus, the Cure, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Magazine (who are now defunct) and Killing Joke. I don't listen to much AM radio. Most radio music bothers me immensely.

Things that motivate or inspire me are unusual instrumentation, unusual lyrics.

**Dave:** What are your views on society?

**Vincent:** We're approaching a major social upheaval. It can happen anywhere within the next four to fifteen years. What will probably spark it is mass unemployment causing a food shortage.

**Dave:** Does the band take any political attitude, or is it more a social commentary?

**Vincent:** We try and transcend social commentary. The band tries to point out situations we feel are wrong and offer solutions.

**Dave:** What plans do you have?

**Vincent:** The band is hell-bent on putting out an album. We would like to gain international recognition. Office is primarily concerned with communication.

We're going into CBC studios early next month to record some songs in French to be broadcast nationally. We're in the process of negotiating to be the Univer-siade games band. We sing in five languages.

**Dave:** Just for the sake of gaining greater recognition?

**Vincent:** We'd like to play to as large and varied an audience as possible. I am very bored with North American mentality. I would also like to see something progressive, something substantial happen for once.

**Dave:** Do you think you can break out of Edmonton into international recognition?

**Vincent:** Office can go all the way. We have a very visual and entertaining stage

show; songs with depth, but some that can be taken on a purely pop, surface level. International recognition doesn't come by chance. We've accomplished a lot in the short time we've been together. We would like to have our album out by the middle of summer. 1983 is going to be a good year in Edmonton. The West Watch project now has a great deal of support.

**Dave:** When is the West Watch album coming out?

**Vincent:** Tentatively, sometime in March. The master tapes have to be compiled, Steven has to choose the order.... Steve Honeyman, our manager, is good. Most important, he likes our music; he has the same kind of ideology we do—money isn't the prime motive.

**"I personally have had sexual experiences covering the entire spectrum. I haven't tried bestiality yet"**

Mostly, the project itself has created a great deal of solidarity between bands and their members. Now they don't frown at each other because they like different styles of music. On a smaller level it's somewhat similar to what happened in London in 1977.

Bands have learned you don't get reviews just by playing gigs. Alan Kellogg of the *Journal* said he's going to be a great deal more supportive this year of the underground music scene.

The mere fact of communicating ideas with a writer distorts them, of course...

I'd like to take this opportunity to personally challenge Ronald Reagan to a display of strength—I'm quite willing, although generally non-violent, to put myself and Ronald Reagan in a room and have a fistfight to see about the arms race. I think my arms are stronger than his. I

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Legend has it that the best beers come from the best water, and to a certain extent it's true. Water rich in certain minerals does make the finest water for brewing. That's because yeast cells feed on minerals during fermentation. So, without minerals there would be no fermentation. Without fermentation there would be no beer. And without beer there would be no point.

Today, all water used for beer is filtered to remove any unsuitable substances. The result is "perfect" brewing water, which is why great beers can still come from cities like Milwaukee and Amsterdam, where the water stopped being remarkable many moons ago.

Here in the West, we still have clean mountain water, and we use it for brewing some pretty fine beers. In the long run, maybe it doesn't make much difference whether you use the Mississippi or a mountain stream.

But we like to think it does.

Lesson #22 from the College of Beer Knowledge.

