

ROUNDABOUT

ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN
Ocean Rain
 Sire

by Nate LaRoi

In the original Bunnyman pose, the singer, nose twitching and ears straining, was always on the verge of taking flight from some unidentified evil lurking in the shadows. *CROCODILES* (****), the group's 1980 debut, flaunted the neurotic manifestations of Ian McCullough, a war-scarred survivor from the wild woods of post-psychedelic paranoia.

Ian McCullough has more depth of character than meets the eye, however, and the truth is he's yet to show us all his colors. *Ocean Rain*, by applying broad strokes of sea and sky, has stripped away the impenetrable fog and smoke enveloping *Heaven up Here* (***) and *Porcupine* (**½), revealing the salty air of the ocean, which proves decidedly easier to inhale over the long haul.

The withdrawal of the rhythm section to the outer parameters has created a lurching central vacuum, a vacuum only partially alleviated by the forward rush of violins, cellos, and woodwinds. The entrapments of vanity and ambitions call; the heavy orchestration suggests a need to maintain the group's illusions of being above the realm of "ordinary pop."

Ian McCullough, meanwhile, is sounding more like the Lizzard King every day. Given the bombastic martyrdom of "Thorn of Crowns," shall we call him J.C. or shall we call this far and away the worst song the Bunnyman has ever recorded? McCullough's lyrics still work too conspicuously within the symbolism of Christian mythology (anyone tired of water imagery?). And as for his spiel on the twin axes of Heaven and Hell ("the Yo-Yo Man"), if you haven't heard that before, you haven't been listening.

Even so, Will Seargent's wide open guitar work is an obvious expansion over the stylistic confines of prior releases. "Silver" and "Nocturnal Me" are highly enjoyable adventures in sound while "The Killing Moon" is a stirring lamentation of the inevitability of man's fall into sin.

And while *Ocean Rain* has drawn unkind words from some of the group's more devoted followers, this may be a mere resistance to change. And for those Bunnyman intimidated by the cold sweat of heavy, humid air, this might be a good time to catch a little fair weather before the next storm.



A little bit of everything in Les Grands Ballets

review by Gerry Magill

With their characteristic flash and enthusiasm, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens once again demonstrated their ability to present a delightful blend of the old and the new.

Combining classical and modern ballet styles in their 1984 Western Canada Tour, the Montreal-based troupe opened the evening with *Capriccio*, a work choreographed by George Balanchine to music by Igor Stravinsky. This piece required great precision of timing and movement, which the dancers brought to it; but, at the same time, they seemed stifled and limited by Balanchine's

choreography. Les Grand Ballets need to be challenged by their material, and *Capriccio* did not demand enough from the dancers.

This was not the case with *Findings*. Commissioned in 1983 for the Banff Centre's 50th anniversary, Brian Macdonald's work is an impressive piece combining elements of mime, theatre, and dance. A metal grid, with one dancer in it, formed a backdrop to the rest of the company, who came and went, discovering, losing, and then rejoining one another. Moving as one, the corps then provided a counter-balance to the lone dancer who moved eerily through the bars of the grid. The music, by Serge Garant and Bach,

was evocative and seemed to move both with and against the dancers, adding yet another layer of depth to the work.

The highlight of the program, *Astaire*, revealed another facet of Les Grands Ballets' diversity. Alberta Ballet's Brydon Paige has created a dazzling tribute to Fred Astaire, which includes tap dance sequences and various musical numbers from Astaire's films. John Stanzel, a founding member of Les Grands Ballets, led the company through such song-and-dance numbers as "We Saw the Sea," "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails," and the famous "Puttin on the Ritz." The company demonstrated their proficiency in mus-

icals with these and other Astaire numbers. Jerilyn Dana, together with John Stanzel in "Cheek to Cheek" and "The Continental," proved that ballet dancers are masters of every genre of dance. This was again demonstrated by Josee Ledoux and Rey Dizon in the flashy and vibrant finale, "The Carioca."

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens have just returned from a tour of the Far East, where they acted as "Canadian Cultural Ambassadors." Audiences everywhere were greatly impressed by the company, who elevate Canadian dance to the level of international acclaim.

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STEVE MARTIN · LILY TOMLIN

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