



photography by
Jerry Shiner

by Frank Liebeck

When Havens talks, he sounds like bad Beckett, and even good Beckett at times is hard to take. Mr Havens' professionalism seems to have suffered a marked decline since last he came upon us from the sunny south. When he sings he goes from good to great. He just doesn't always sing.

His menagerie of hippies entertained the audience for the first twenty minutes of Massey Hall concert with their electronic wit by

pulling out the plug, putting in the plug, stuff like that. The groupies were there, so were the flashbulbs. I was there, so was Grazia. Grazia I haven't seen for two years. I thought she was in Detroit. "I am in Detroit!" she said.

But his guitar and voice, when finally put to use, showed why the place was packed. His folk blues has more soul and mood than any other folk singer's around. Pretty good for somebody with no teeth.

Portnoy's Complaint

reviewed by Linda Bohnen

Portnoy's Complaint, for those few of you who have not yet heard, is Philip Roth's new novel about Alex Portnoy and his charming mother Sophie. Roth has recorded the funny, obscene diatribe of Alex, stretched out on the analyst's couch inveighing against the Most Awful Jewish Mother who ever was.

What can we say of Sophie Portnoy (nee Ginsky)? Sophie Ginsky, who threatens her six-year-old son with a bread knife when he will not eat his vegetables. Jack (ne Jacob) Portnoy, the most constipated shlemiel of a father who ever was. Jack Portnoy, who eats prunes and All-Bran until they are backing in his throat.

Read about Alex's Revenge (which is also his Curse): you name it and Alex has whacked off into it. His sock(!). His sister's brassiere cup(!). A slab of raw liver destined for the Portnoy dinnertable(!!!) And later into shiksas, beautiful gentile girls with straight fair hair and

straight, small noses. Into the Monkey, the illiterate model girl with the sweetest little pussy in the West.

All of which is to say that Roth has written the funniest and possibly the best novel of the year. (Not that Portnoy's Complaint is flawless. My mother, who is a Jewish mother, but not a Jewish Mother, maintains Roth has his generations wrong: Sophie Portnoy speaks and behaves like an immigrant, not like the graduate of an American high school. Occasionally the narrative circles repetitively instead of spiraling.) I imagine the writing of Portnoy's Complaint as Norman Podhoretz describes it in Making It: Roth agonizing over the typewriter, pumping away at the creative juices, and reaching literary orgasm on the last page. It is, as it were, written from the heart.

Yet for all Portnoy's Complaint's brilliance it is time for Roth to find a new Thing. With this book he comes a full circle back to the old stomping ground of Goodbye, Columbus. The

nerves are more tightly tensed, the voice is shriller; but the substance is much the same. Except that Goodbye, Columbus, and Roth's other books, now seem like prologue. I suspect that Portnoy's Complaint has been a long time in Roth's mind and that he has been for a long time fighting writing it. For Jewish Mothers and Roth make uncomfortable bedfellows. In Goodbye, Columbus he avoided the issue by absenting the hero's parents altogether. In Letting Go the mother is dead and the hero is quite on his own, (though one could argue convincingly that his mother's presence pervades throughout) And When She Was Good seems now even a more desperate and unsuccessful attempt to graduate from The Jewish hang-up.

Towards the end of Portnoy's Complaint Alex cries, "Listen, come to my aid, will you — and quick! Spring me from this role I play of the smothered son in the Jewish joke! Because it's beginning pall a little at thirty-three." Portnoy's Complaint has hopefully sprung Roth.

British

by Alex Cramer

In the space of a week, Toronto has hosted three British blues groups.

John Mayall made his first Toronto appearance and was greeted by enthusiastic fans who had waited a long time for him. I tried talking with him before he went on but he was rather uncommunicative, giving only yes and no answers.

He seems to have developed a rather large ego as he has become more popular. Mayall told me that he wasn't impressed with any other blues groups or musicians. He thought that every blues musician should do only his own stuff. Moreover he said that there aren't any blues bands proper, just musicians supporting one main figure. It is for this reason that he broke up his Bluesbreakers, replacing it with a back-up band.

I wasn't getting very far with Mayall, so I moved over to Mick Taylor, the 20 year old guitarist. Taylor was very friendly and natural. He told me that Peter Green, the former Bluesbreaker guitarist left Mayall because he had to play in the style the chief dictated. Now his Fleetwood Mac, he plays the way he wants, in a very basic earthy manner that gives the band a very distinctive sound.

The Mayall concert was excellent and proved to me that this musician has every right to be

Rhumba



Rhumba

by Dennis Brennan

The rhumba is all follow-through. It's all in the way you leave the dance-floor. Wherever the rhumba gets danced, people will yell, "Let's see some follow-through on that rhumba, hmmm?"

At the old public school dances we were kinda daredevils about this: "Man I'm not gonna follow-through on a stoopid rhumba. . . ." Next day we'd get a summons to The Office. The Prince would be down on us: "There have been complaints about the way you hoodlums follow through on your rhumba and the way you left the dance-floor."

Never could figure out what he was talking about. "Now, I want you to clean up your attitude," he'd say.

We could hardly wait for age 16

to get out into the life-factories, get some bucks together, buy one of them Automatic Rhumba Follow-Throughs. Taches right onto yer rhumba. Leave the dance-floor any way you want to, this amazing Automatic Rhumba Follow-Through does the rest.

ON KNOWING ANYBODY — Samovar Charlie rolled over in his barrel. His barrel rolled over in the earth. The earth rolled over on its axis. Its axis rolled over the sun. The sun rolls over in the universe.

Samovar Charlie said, "Man this isn't getting me anywhere." Samovar Charlie's dog came through the weeds, batting and fattening his tail on the burdocks. Samovar Charlie lifted an eyelid. Ughaugh.

"Hello, my dog," he said. The

dog laughed as silently as he could. He actually couldn't believe Samovar Charlie. He was such a yuk.

Samovar Charlie stuck a dirty polished hand out of the barrel and into the earth. The earth quivered. "Hmmm," Samovar Charlie said, "a spring day this time." He looked up and saw his dog looking down at him and he laughed his head off. He couldn't believe that wingy dog. But the dog didn't have to stand there and he ran off to the far corner of the field and got into his chocolate bars. He always brought a few chocolate bars along on a trip.

The sun got into the sky and the dog cranked some Molly-O and relaxed himself and Samovar Charlie got up, polished up his dirt, stepped into the field and did

an amazing rhumba with some old pricker bush.

Then with a sumach tree, a granite-hump with a big nose, and an old wallflower oak. The dog was convulsing on his back, sneezing and laughing. He had got some Molly-O up his snout. Samovar Charlie glanced over from his rhumba and saw the four white-dirty-brown legs jerking around in the air above the old grass.

"I'm playing the field!" Samovar Charlie hollered. "And I don't even know anybody." Samovar Charlie's been following-through all his life and he doesn't know anybody. (Three fields over a farmer was doing a hoe-down in his grapery.)

NOT SO MUCH A DANCE AS A SPELLING MISTAKE — Opened my Oxford, flicked to rhumba. No

rhumba. You can't get anything out of an Oxford dictionary. They had Rhodes Scholar where rhumba should have been: "Holder of scholarship tenable at Oxford. . . ." Now there's the kind of meaning is better left in a dictionary. No use getting that out.

Phoned the Central Intelligence Library. "What's whumba?" They never heard of it either. "How does it spell?" they asked. I had the word written right down. Held it up to my nose and spelt it. It spelled alright: r-h-u-m-b-a.

They said, "In what connection did you find the word?" Made me feel like a plumber. The old plumber phones in to the shop: "Boss? Tsme. On the job here an I found a word in the sewer connection."

So I told them in the sewer and