

Sounds of a Beating Heart



BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

New York band Yo La Tengo produces swelling organ music that those record stores carrying their music would file under 'Alternative' for lack of a better category. They are the kind of band that spawn comprehensive web

pages — one of which has had 34,478 hits since April of 1996; the kind of band that fans don't want getting too popular for fear that they wouldn't feel special anymore. Yo La Tengo is Ira Kaplan, Georgia Hubley and James McNew. James McNew would rather sit at home and watch the Simpson's than talk

to me, but here's what he had to say.

Gaz: Where has the latest album taken the band?

YLT: You mean geographically? No, but let's go with that.

So far, we've been on tour pretty much since April and that was about two months in America, a month in Europe — this trip, which is another six weeks — and then in the wintertime we'll be in Europe for another six weeks — it's taken us a lot of places.

Are you touring more because of the latest album's popularity?

I think so, we're going places because people seem to want us to — which is nice, it's exhausting, but that's not really the point.

Is the album more popular because the music has changed or are more people responding to the same music?

I don't think we've changed anything, it's really kinda' nice, it's great actually. Maybe more people are just receptive to it or aware of it. Whatever the success difference, I really feel it's on our own terms.

Yo La Tengo seems to have this mythical status — the people who have heard of you are rabid about you. Do you get a sense of that?

Sounds more or less on the mark.

Are you getting obsessive fan letters...

We do get an awful lot of mail, they're not like — stalker obsessive — let's say caring instead of obsessive. Obsessive has such a negative tone.

What have you done to deserve this?

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Copyright, the band has been around for nearly a decade. They started as a small band from Vancouver and have gradually gained a national reputation, flirting on and off with success over the years. *Love Story* is the second album released by the band, having produced the ill-fated *Circle C* back in 1991. *Love Story* is a collection

Golly, I don't know. I still feel a lot like I did six years ago when I first started playing in the group. Even when we're touring it's like 'Oh boy, Ann Arbor Michigan!'. I'm not really thinking about 'How are we going to do this now?' or 'What can we do to be a little higher up the ladder?'

Where do you see Yo La Tengo as having come from through your series of albums?

I think *Electropura* and *I Can Hear the Heart Beating as One* still had strains or feelings that I would associate with [Yo La Tengo's] first records. From playing together for such a long time there are just understood sounds, a recognizable feel to the songs.

What are some of the basic things about Yo La Tengo that people who have never heard of you need to know?

We're all meat eaters — so if you're going to have us over for dinner you can pretty much make whatever you want. Georgia's left-handed, so any kind of gift-giving that's going to involve left or right-hand things — keep that in mind...can-openers, baseball gloves. Check with us first for any record giving, we all have really big record collections and might already have it. Those are probably first and foremost.

Yo La Tengo is performing as part of the Halifax On Music Festival on Saturday, September 26th at Reflections Cabaret and at the festival's finale on Sunday, September 27th at the Lord Nelson Ballroom.

of 9 songs that cover a wide musical spectrum, balancing intricate and complex musical arrangements. Much of the music on *Love Story* is reminiscent of 80s pop music with the influence of blues and funk.

The first single, "Transfiguration", starts the album off with a bang. It's a wonderful blend of music styles encompassing elements of jazz, blues and pop in one, and gives *Love Story* a lot of promise. However, after the first three or four songs, the album begins a slow descent.

The songs become less and less



impressive as their stylistic complexity declines, ultimately leaving cheesy pop music which brings back memories of bad Def Leppard and Motley Crue. Copyright made a good attempt at creating a unique sound with *Love Story*, it's too bad they didn't carry the theme throughout the entire album.

I will say that I found the lead singer's voice to be one of the more impressive qualities of their music. There is something familiar about his voice and yet it is entirely unique, which is perhaps the only reason I could listen to the entire album.

Hopefully, Copyright will sound much better in concert than on the CD. They are performing Friday, September 26 at Blues Corner. If you're a fan of Copyright, you might want to check it out. For those interested: while several songs on *Love Story* were a bit of an anti-climax, I would still recommend going because at their best, Copyright has a unique, alternative sound that may come shining through in their live performance.

PATRICK SHAUNESSY

CD REVIEWS

Love Story
Copyright
ViK/BMG

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Full Blown Possession
The Grifters
Subpop/Warner

These guys seem depressed, and when you listen to this CD, it's not about having fun.

Employing heavy distortion, abrasive harmonies (they admit they're not the greatest singers), gritty vocals, and heavy doses of blues, the Grifters take you through song after song of wallowing self-pity.

"Sweetest Thing", is a ballad, reminiscent of a lone cowboy crying in a beer over lost love. Alcoholism serves as fodder for a lot of songs on the album.

Another, "You Be the Stranger", is a spacey, rambling instrumental full of key and mood changes. It is fun, surfy (the band was aided by John Stivers of Impala), and makes you want to hear it again. In one instance, you feel as though you are listening to the theme song for the next spy-action flick; but next, the track is relaxed — but could bust out at any moment.

The Grifters perform as part of the Halifax On Music Festival on September 26th at Reflections Cabaret.

GREG MCFARLANE

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