

Excal goes continental

Europe's jazz fests a "no-wave" rave

Steven Hacker

Jazz has long held a fascination for Europeans. In fact many American musicians, such as Anthony Braxton and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, achieved recognition and popularity in Europe long before they did in the U.S. Jazz in Europe is presented in nightclubs and concert-halls as it is here, but what is most impressive is the number and variety of festivals that take place in both the small towns and large cities. Most of the festivals are supported in varying degrees by municipal governments.

Each festival has its own distinct programming policies and each one its own mood and atmosphere. What they have in common is that most of them are eager to support and encourage the less familiar names, in addition to presenting the better-known acts.

Neuwied, West Germany is a small city on the Rhine better known to Europeans for its unique suspension bridge and the nearby nuclear reactor than for its Festival of Contemporary Music held each June. The organizers of this 4-year-old festival have turned it into a showcase for artists on the innovative, but controversial, ECM label. This year's big draws were Eberhard Weber, Rainer Bruninghaus, Joachim Kuhn (all Germans), Miroslav Vitous and Terje Rypdal. The lack of variation in the eight hours of

live music eventually became too tedious for many in the audience, who were sprawled all over the gymnasium floor on sleeping bags and blankets. But those who were not sleeping were treated to some fine solo piano by Joachim Kuhn in addition to a rare duet appearance by bassist Eberhard Weber and guitarist Bill Frisell.

Just an hour's train ride from the chaotic atmosphere of Amsterdam is the relatively peaceful city of The Hague. In addition to its casinos and diplomats, The Hague is also the location of what is probably the world's largest three-day jazz bash, the North Sea Jazz Festival.

While the Montreux Jazz Festival still seems to be the best known of the European Jazz Festivals, nothing can approach the North Sea festival in terms of quantity. Held in July, this year it offered about 120 different acts over a three-day period. The festival's size allows its organizers plenty of room to program jazz of several different forms, each being covered comprehensively. Just about all of the stars who were touring Europe were present: Dexter Gordon, Herbie "Hands" Hancock, Al Jarreau, McCoy Tyner and many more. Also featured were several players in the free-jazz vein, such as "Blood" Ulmer, James Newton, Chico Freeman, and Albert Mangelsdorff. The blues, salsa,



John Surman blows a big one as Miroslav Vitous considers the possibilities of penguin-modified existentialism.

dixieland and dutch jazz all received similar exposure. In all, approximately 800 musicians were involved, with the concerts taking place simultaneously in the massive Congress Centre.

Obviously, having such a large festival can have its drawbacks, one being that too many people enter and leave the halls during a performance, coming from or going to another show. Some musicians and fans do not like the format of North Sea, claiming that the tight playing schedules and spectator movement make the event too hectic. This is true to some extent. However, many of the artists managed to overcome that aspect of the festival and gave outstanding performances. Among the highlights (and there were many) were the Gil Evans Orchestra, the "Tenor Sax Battle" (an all-star sax jam session), Chico Freeman Quartet and Heavy Days Are Here Again, a popular Dutch band that deserves much more recognition in North America.

Moers is another small city in Germany and for the last 10 years this quiet centre has hosted a Festival of New Jazz.

Held outdoors in a beautiful park in the middle of the city, this festival is unique in both its programming and atmosphere. With several thousand people coming from all over Europe and camping right in the park, the

Ornette Coleman. The Moers lineup also included an extensive series of workshops entitled Portraits and Interaction, designed to promote interaction between the musicians involved and the audience. Over the three-day period, members of the various groups performed in spontaneous free improvisations with one another in an informal and intimate setting. The artistic director of the Moers Festival is Burkhard Hennen, the head of the Moers Music record label.

As good as they may seem on paper, jazz festivals are not always the best places to experience live music. The settings are often not as intimate as in the clubs — it's hard to develop a rapport between audience and artist in a large outdoor park, gymnasium, or tent. In addition, listening to live music for eight-or ten-hour periods can be very demanding and great performances often go unappreciated by music-weary listeners. However, for a jazz-starved backpacker wandering through Europe, it sure beats going to bed early in the youth hostel.



Bill Frisell and Eberhard Weber demonstrate a basic cha-cha step on stage in Germany.

Tough pick in dick flick

Mark Lewis

Prince of the City is a taut, intense study of a narcotics cop's struggle with himself — what he believes his moral duty to be versus his duty to his job, friends, and family. The film, running for almost three hours, is able to sustain its considerable emotional power through several channels. Much of the power lies in director Sidney Lumet's insightful perception of the concept of the group, and in particular, the conflict engendered when an individual who is part of a small, intimate group goes against that group for reasons of personal morality.

Treat Williams delivers an exceptional performance as Danny Ciello, head of a Special Investigative Unit in narcotics who reaches the point where he can no longer reconcile his actions as a cop with his conscience, and as penance, agrees to help a federal

commission on police corruption. His one condition is that his partners in the unit, who are also his dearest friends, are to be left alone.

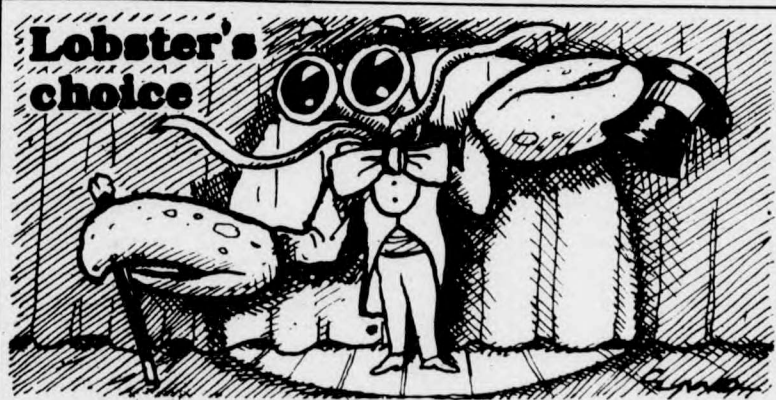
As the investigation goes deeper, however, it becomes increasingly difficult for Danny to keep them uninvolved. Because the relationships within the group are shown so positively in the film, the process of their disintegration and Danny's obvious feelings of guilt, frustration and remorse, give

Prince of the City its intense, tragic mood.

Behind the drama lies the moral issues of whether the end justifies the means. Whether the members of a law enforcement body are just in using illegal methods if it results in the arrest and conviction of a criminal who might not otherwise be apprehended. The question becomes a real dilemma for both Danny and ourselves, and while Danny makes his choice and must live with the consequences, we are left at the end of the film to make our own decision.

In asking its questions through the emotional and moral upheaval of its main characters, **Prince of the City** produces a similar upheaval in the viewer, providing a powerful experience of the kind that has been sorely missed in most Hollywood films of recent years. It shouldn't be missed now that it is here.

"If that's art,
I'm a Hottentot!"
-Harry S. Truman-



Name-the-Contest Contest!!!

The Lobster's Choice column is traditionally devoted to tipping you off on the most interesting events taking place on campus. Since there's nothing much happening this first week, we are devoting Pere Lobster's space to our weekly contest/quiz thing. Since this quiz doesn't have a name yet, that'll be your first dangerous challenge—**Name the contest!** And if your entry is chosen, you get a free copy of the new Triumph album, Allied Forces, courtesy Attic Records. So get your suggestions (include your name) to Excalibur, Comrade Lobster, 111 Central Square by Wed., Sept. 16 at noon. No Excal slaves need apply. S.R.