

Dr. Vic's Picks

Prefab sprout: Jordan: The Comeback

I was hangin' out down at King's Place the other day, thinking about increasing my medication dosage and looking for decent size smoke butts on the floor. My quest took me into that "Tapes R Us" place that claims to be a record store. I was surprised to discover that in addition to the usual rock/pop/country/classical/zither sections, there was a section called "Adult Pop". Hoping to be an adult myself one day, I decided to investigate. Most of it appears to be pop for people

who don't like rock: Phil Collins, Whitney Houston, Steve Winwood, Steve Wonder, Paul McCartney: you get the picture. Mostly stuff produced by middle-aged former rockers who have achieved tremendous commercial success by creating bland, accessible pablum for AOR radio. Then they get their hair done and make Michelob ads.

"But Dr. Vic" you query, "is this such a bad thing? Don't thirtyscumthings deserve boss sounds of their own?"

"Yes indeedy they do" I thoughtfully reply, while graciously allowing you to pay for mu cocktail. It is a natural thing that people who

have always listened to music, and who made pop an integral part of their lives, would grow tired of their Nugent and Sabbath albums. Especially now that they only drink cough syrup when they have a cough. So as they age and mellow (like a fine Kraft low fat cheddar slice;) they swing to non-threatening sounds made by familiar artists.

This is where the problems begin. Granted, there are a few older 60's artists (Van Morrison, Paul Simon, Neil Young) who continue to produce superior stuff. But most of the "adult" stuff is dentist office muzak. Much of the blame for this dismal state of affairs rests with

radio, which is too busy playing THE HITS OF THE 60's, 70's & 80's to realise that there are relatively unknown musicians creating good music that would appeal to the Big Swill generation. Artists like John Martyn, Lloyd Cole, and Roddy Frame of Aztec Camera, produce smooth, accessible, but interesting music that could be successful with those people whose lives are all but technically over. The same can be said about **prefab sprout**, whose latest album "Jordan: The Comeback" is the subject of review here.

prefab sprout have made a few little-notices gems since their debut album Two Wheels good in the early 80's. Jordan is their most ambitious and successful album, in the sense that it is over 60 minutes long, and it all works. Chief Sprout Paddy McAloon is an accomplished songwriter, creating great pop with intriguing, somewhat obscure lyrics. The album is produced by Thomas Dolby, who creates a shimmering jazzy veneer that remains consistent throughout, on both the upbeat and sombre numbers. The background vocals are dreamy and subtle. The theres expressed are interesting: I think the title song is about Elvis (the King

of Rock 'n Roll) hiding out in the desert, waiting for the right song to ride back into our hearts on. It contains the lyrics "I'm tellin' you that if I'd taken all that medication, Man I'd rattled like one o' my lil girls toys." "One of the Broken" is a heartfelt paeon for compassion, featuring a spoken introduction from God. "Michael" is a plea to the angel Michael from his old friend Lucifer, asking him to put in a good work with the Big Guy. Elvis, God, and Satan all appearing on the same album—what more could a disoriented and bewildered authority freak ask for.

Jordan: The Comeback is at times funky and pelvic, at others folksy and thoughtful. It is the type of album that can be playing in the background during power dinner/networking evenings, or it can be enjoyed while carefully listening: unobtrusive but not inane. I have but one complaint: generally I like absurd, pointless things (How else could I justify my own existence?) But "prefab sprout" is just about the most precious, dorkiest name imaginable.

"GET CLASSICAL

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interesting and Soviet culture suffered by it. However, some composers, such as Shostakovich and Prokofieff, could not bring themselves to lower their standards, and both suffered official rebukes, with loss of privileges and the threat of loss of a lot more. The ironic thing about the Communist policy is that it was counter-productive. The quality of output under the regime of terror suffered, and the true political value of the program lies in pride: pride in quality, pride in greatness. The program made greatness more difficult to achieve, and the pride comes not on the first hearing of a work, but after maybe half a century of playing and listening to it. Shostakovich is just now becoming the source of pride to Russia that he deserves to be, and that will continue to grow. But it has nothing to do with the program of political censorship, because that program is now, happily, dead.

While Shostakovich is finding his place in the sun, Prokofieff is still not receiving the recognition which I feel he deserves. He was one of the most original composers of the twentieth century, and he continues to surprise and delight. One delight which awaits you is the seldom played Duo

Sonata for two violins which will be the centerpiece of the next concert of my Wednesday Noon Series. Jan Zwicky, a violinist new to Fredericton this year, will join me to play this peak of the duo repertoire, as well as a number of charming and amusing works by Teleman, Bartok and Mozart. Do come and join us for this informal concert at Mem Hall, Wed Mar. 20 at 12:30. Even if you can't make the Wed. Noon concert, perhaps you

can take in the Abraxis Trio concert, part of the Creative Arts Series, Sun., Mar 24, 8:00 PM at Mem Hall. The Trio is made up of the unusual combination of two flutes and bassoon, and you can be sure that their presentation will be unusual as well. I know two of the players quite well, and they are not only excellent, but imaginative and just a little bit crazy. Should be a good concert.

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