

SHOCK the sedated

By DAVID R. BOYLE

The Club Flamingo was host to a musical event last Wednesday with the concert appearance of John Cale. Cale was, with Lou Reed, one of the founders of the Velvet Underground and left the band after the *Velvet Underground and Nico* and *White Light/White Heat* albums of 1967 and 1968. The albums in turn inspired a new generation of bands in the 70s and 80s. Cale began a long solo career with 1969's *Vintage Violence* that delivered albums of almost every description with no two sounding quite the same.

Welcome to the concise history of John Cale in concert. Cale delivered the best of his compositions and avoided the overproduction and over-orchestration that often buried his work. He allowed himself an intensity that undoubtedly shocked the sedated in the audience from the thunderous ending of his first song "Ghost Story". It's difficult to imagine one person banging on a guitar being described as "thunderous" but that's exactly how it sounded. Throughout the concert, Cale

alternated between guitar and electric piano that opened up many of his songs for the listener in a way that some of his albums never could.

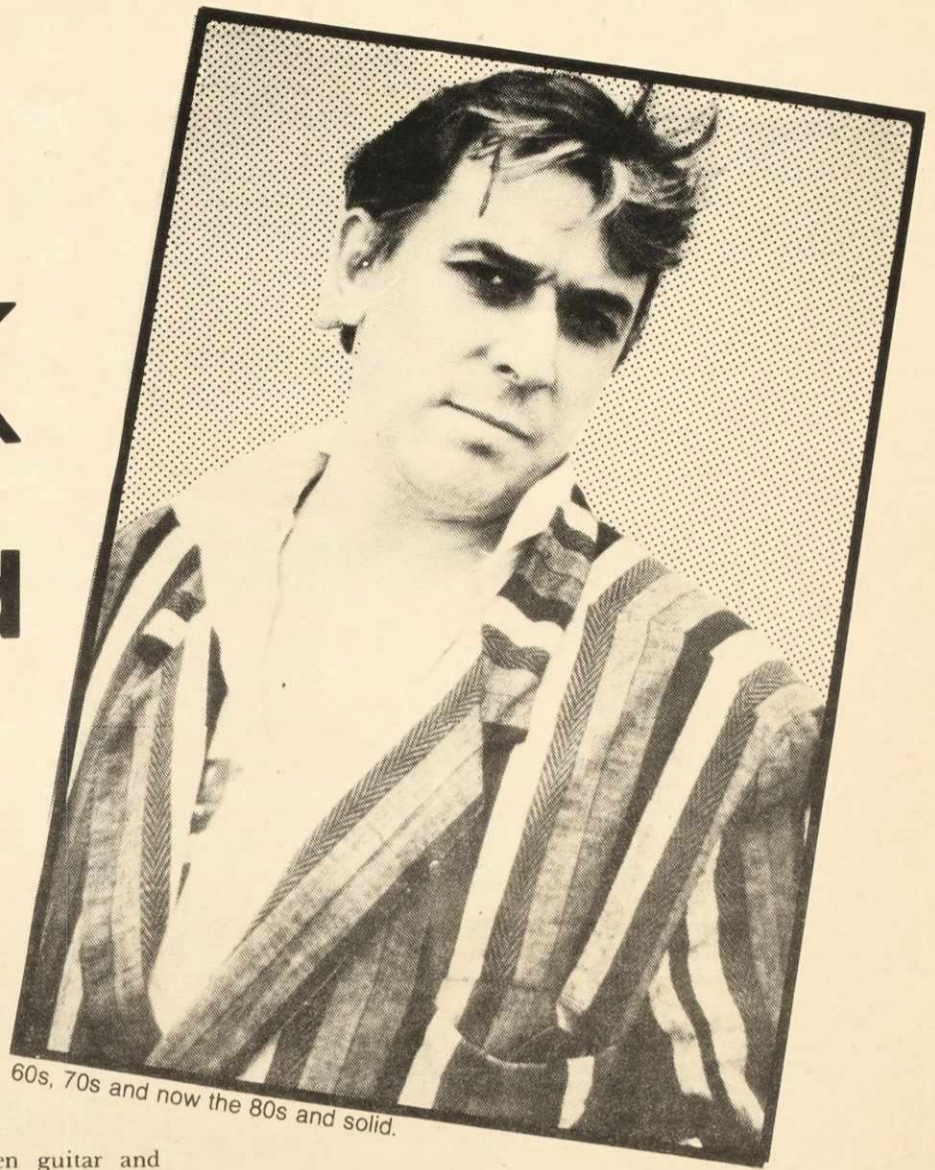
Cale seemed happy to deal in his own musical history in this concert than he did in his previous live album *Sabotage/Live* (1980) where he chose to perform Rufas Thomas' "Walking the Dog" instead of his own songs. The songs ranged from material dating back to *Vintage Violence* to last year's *Artificial Intelligence*. Cale delivered his work as a coherent body, demonstrating that the songs written in the past

were still alive and valid while also placing his recent work in a context where they could be heard in conjunction with his "classics". Cale surprised many (including the curtain) with an encore for the Velvet's "Waiting for my Man" that was anything but by the numbers. Cale tore through the song as if it were a hybrid of the experimental music he studied in the 60's and a Sun record's Jerry Lee Lewis song.

This concert could be considered a great success for the Halifax live music scene. Halifax has become a city where only the

worst excesses of "corporate music" could be expected to visit. Despite the successes of independent radio and local band activity, it is the response to a concert like Cale's that will put this city "on the map". Towards the close of the concert John Cale exclaimed, "Halifax, I owe you one." Rather, we owe John Cale and the organizers of this event, our gratitude for a very special and entertaining night.

David R. Boyle hosts John, I'm Only Dancing, Monday nights at 12:30 on 97.5 FM CKDU.



60s, 70s and now the 80s and solid.

Vox takes a bow

By BETH CUMMING

Jazz, folk and new age sounds fused in the form of Vox Violins, the opening act for John Cale on January 28, at the Club Flamingo. In spite of the \$13.00 ticket charge, a full house was in attendance to hear original material that was dreamy, hypnotic and at other times rousing.

Beth Bartley stretched and otherwise exercised her wide vocal range, and her rhythmic violin bowing seemed to set the pace and mood. Mark Clifford on lead guitar and Jim Packer on bass fell into the swing.

Next was "Easter Ether" which is on one side of their 45 (new records). Attention was then focussed on Mark; his low, low voice and twangy, pick-up-and-go guitar.

Last summer, the group met

with a warm welcome in Vancouver at the Canadian Independent Recording Artists Concert, an alternative to Expo '86. There are plans for a move to Vancouver in the near future. "Halifax is a good place to live... nice people, but there just aren't the venues... we weren't supposed to play here (the Club Flamingo) because it is blacklisted by the musicians' union," says Bartley.

"Do You Remember" was a daydreamy atmospheric piece with electric special effects and cryptic words (strains of "O Holy Night"). At this point the sound levels were much improved, previously being too loud and verging on distortion.

The mystical mood continued with "Emily Carr" where Bartley seemed to be singing directly to the painter's ghost. The instru-

mentals came together on this one in a crazed, swaying chorus.

Another high point was "Coming Out" which is also on Vox Violin's 45. "I don't know what I'm protecting, there's no place to hide... the living affect the living" — vigorous lyrics for shaking off inertia. According to one audience member, her swooping vocals owe a lot to Kate Bush and Joni Mitchell.

In an interview, Bartley said that she and Clifford sing the pieces that they each write and then collaborate on the instrumental arrangements. They have been working together for 7 or 8 years since they met in London, Ontario. They met Packer who is also with October Game and was in Steps Around the House, in their present base of Halifax. He has been contributing a slightly

funky bassline for about a year.

Sarah MacLachlan, who was also a ticket taker that night, did a good job of back up singing on the last couple of numbers. There was a torchy song about needing "to be by myself". Vox Violins closed their set with a story about a friend whose dreams of becoming a dancer originated in childhood, along with the cancer from a commercial PCB dump that killed him. In spite of the deeply felt lyrics this was not depressing — the chorus was "celebrate life".

This was a welcome change from the usual videos that Club Flamingo screens between acts. A few comments from the audience: "evil nursery rhymes"; "pseudo intelligence"; "it's not art, it's garbage".

Anyway, Vox Violins did more than just warm up the audience for John Cale.

