

# Not pure gold, but very close to the Midas touch

by Peter van Feggelen

Dire Straits is back on the charts again with their fourth album, **Love Over Gold**, following up the enormous success of **Making Movies**, **Communiqué** and their debut album, **Dire Straits**. The first single from the new album, "Private Investigations", first appeared at 13 on the UK singles chart and rose to 4 in the second week. In Canada, radio stations are already noticing the success destined for the album.

"Love Over Gold" can be viewed as a continuation of "Making Movies" but it has a distinct difference. "Love Over Gold" is a much more mature and experienced Dire Straits. The album was produced,

written and arranged by Mark Knopfler himself and a lot of the commerciality present in "Making Movies" is gone. It seems the band was more interested in producing a good album than making the radio charts (the latter, as it turns out, they will achieve anyway).

The original Dire Straits started playing together in 1977 and success came almost overnight. Only six months after forming the band, they made a demo tape which was so impressive that it secured them a world-wide recording contract. A month later they joined the Talking Heads on their UK tour of '77-'78. Their three subsequent albums have earned them a place in rock fame.

The album, in general, is good. The songs are all quite long (at least 5-1/2 mins.) which has good and bad aspects. The good aspect is that C100 cannot play fourteen minute supersets, so the album won't get airplay ad nauseum. The bad aspect is that Mark Knopfler's solos, in every song, get a little boring so that the songs seem extended to fill up time.

"Love Over Gold" begins with the lengthy track "Telegraph Road", which, although drawn out by Knopfler's self-indulgent solos, is one of the better tracks on the album. The vocals resemble Bruce Springsteen in content but with a cleaner and much more distinct musical atmosphere created by

Knopfler's whining guitar and Alan Clark's piano/synthesizer track. "Telegraph Road" is followed by "Private Investigations" (the first single released for radio play), which is an odd but catchy tune with a nice bass/guitar mixture and a vibe and marimba track (a first for Dire Straits - played by Mike Mainieri).

The second side of the album begins with "Industrial Disease". Although not without a definite message in the lyrics, it is very commercial sounding. The vocals tend to drone on to the point of being boring and redundant. The final two tracks - "It Never Rains" and the title track - end the album on a very mellow note that is much

more like the "old" Dire Straits. However, the piano and synthesizer work make it obvious that the simple guitar sound of the original Dire Straits will never be back. Whether this is bad or good is hard to say, for the keyboard work on the album offers some of its high points, especially when combined with Knopfler's spanish guitar work in "Private Investigations".

When Dire Straits formed, a friend of the band suggested the name because of the band's financial plight at the time. With the release of this album, on top of the enormous success of their past albums, it is obvious that Dire Straits won't be having financial problems for quite a while.

# Diary of a Nova Scotia pioneer about individuality

by Steve Gregoris

A handsome sequel to **Hot Tongue, Cold Shoulder** (1981), Heather Davidson's novel, **The Cow's Tail**, is the fictional journal of Catherine Thallman, Peter Thallman's partner in the exodus of a Connecticut family to Nova Scotia in 1759.

The earlier diary of her husband Peter presented us with the story of a headstrong, earth-hewn New England farmer concerned with shrinking amounts of available arable land in the state and its long-term effects on his progeny (namely, forcing them to an urban life). His desire to move to Nova Scotia and sign for a land grant evokes a modicum of opposition from the family, but they finally agree and make the trek. They settle and the family tree takes root.

As a companion volume to the earlier novel, **The Cow's Tail** presents a distinctly 'other' view -- that of a female engaged in the pioneering process, and that of a mother and wife.

At first Catherine is a quiet, unquestioning mother, without willpower or spunk, neither keen nor perceptive. She believes that her frail youngest son, Aaron, should 'enter God's ministry'. The local minister is a dupe and ultimate

hypocrite who performs the usual amount of waffling and tightrope-balancing in response to the degrees of community pressure. When Aaron begins to farm, her concern apparently fades, only occasionally reiterated. To the end of the book Catherine fails to catch on, just as she fails to latch on to the reality of her daughters being different and individual human beings.

Catherine is a homebody and stiflingly traditional. Author Davidson has made her often as self-righteous as Peter, but passively so.

*"How dare he (Peter) show such weakness! How dare he bring such shame to my family!"*

Catherine writes, but *does* nothing. She becomes more perceptive and goes on to realise, in a succinct and precise analysis:

*"He (Peter) was my powerful and wise hero. After we were married I never saw him show fear or uncertainty. I never questioned his judgement until I learned of his plan to come to Nova Scotia. This winter my hero disappeared. In his place is a man with strength and weaknesses."*

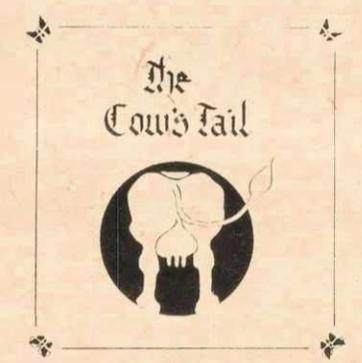
Again, she shows insight, but does not act on it. Indeed, she practically

casts her husband aside and busily goes about the business of living.

There are elements which contribute minimally to the advancement of her character. Ladies form a local discussion club. It allows them to express themselves and question and confront facets of life that they otherwise would not, but its effects are self-contained. The one woman who is most memorable, Martha, is a widow who sets her own terms and acts of her own accord. We are given insights into Catherine's reasons for keeping a journal: "I am the central figure in a sad and amusing drama", and its cathartic and personal worth, and they are revealing, but remain, as does Catherine, passive.

Though she advocates premarital sex -- "I would take (a man) as long as what he did brought no harm to our families," -- she clings to a stultifying, strict and sexist Christian tradition -- men may drink to excess, but "every man needs a sober and Christian wife to set an example for his family". Even though she has the opportunity to sleep with another man, she does not. As she ages she becomes frantically concerned with presentability and social acceptance.

Catherine becomes a sour, mal-



Ruth, who has married into a 'decent' family and is, in Catherine's eyes, successful.

The work is well-crafted and Heather Davidson's writing is as reticent as Catherine herself. The pattern of Catherine's life is traced skillfully to its end of unfulfilled potential. Progress, in the life of Catherine Thallman, is defined as the occasional expansion into forceful and insightful observation and opinion. At the end, her life shrinks into the dried-up psyche of a spiteful, bitter old woman.

contented woman. Unlike the decisive Peter, she degenerates into a one-sided person, matching her bitter state of mind. She becomes unattentive to and uncaring for the parts of her family who have not fulfilled her vision or expectations. She rarely mentions Peter in the last months. Of her tomboyish daughter who has married against mother's will, she writes:

*"I am told Sarah has a son. With Sarah and Jonathan as parents, he will never amount to anything. I wonder who his father is."*

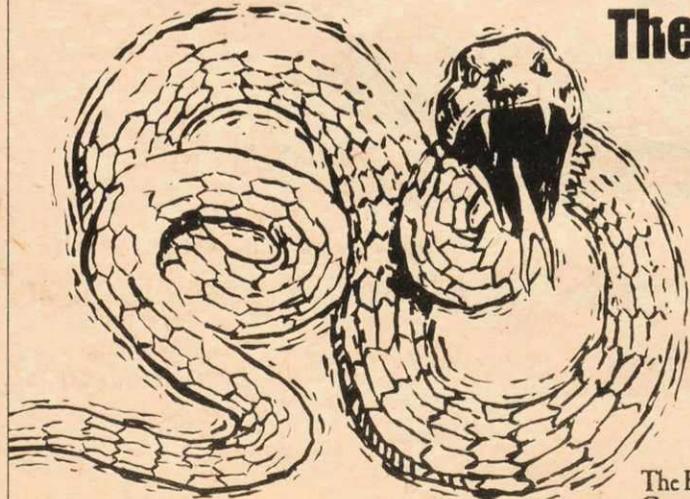
This, the last entry, shows her ultimate unaccepting posture. Catherine cannot cope with Sarah's non-conformity to the values that have been her life. The last part of **The Cow's Tail** is spent with daughter

By definition, a diary lends itself to intimacy and makes readers privy to a character's thoughts and feelings. More often than not, though, it is what Catherine does not write (or what she implies) which is most revealing. This is ultimately satisfying and a mark of good craftsmanship; it makes the reader think and pay attention to the subtleties of the narrative. Also, because Catherine often complements Peter's description of events, the reader obtains an overview of the whole situation. The spouses, by their own admission, rarely express themselves to one another and so, in a very real sense, their bond exists in the reader. We, as outsiders, join them by reading their diaries.



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