

Rainbow's posturing big problem

Review by Gordon Turtle

For the third consecutive year, the U of A Literary Society has published and released *Gasoline Rainbow*, billing it as a literary magazine featuring the work of university students and writers from within the community. Like the last two years, the magazine is of mixed quality.

Now I'm not going to say that the term "literary magazine" is the slightest bit pretentious, but at times the only thing literary about *Rainbow* is that it contains no non-fiction. The creative writers contributing to the book share one very common problem of beginning writers; they try to imbue their work with, shall we say, a sense of importance that the work just does not merit.

In most of the works, there is little room for a human element; the material seems stilted and oftentimes contrived in the most silly and unforgivable manner. An example of this is Doug Simpson's photo on page 7: what aspires to be a somber and stunning photo looks more like an ad for leather coats in an Eaton's catalogue. Simpson makes up for this error however, most especially with his photo on page 26.

Gasoline Rainbow consists mainly of short, (very short) stories and poetry; the photography unfortunately only serves as punctuation. Though tinged with right-wing cynicism, Bruce Cookson's poem "12

Noon" stands out in the poetry department. The work captures a quick succession of images that seem isolated but become connected by the flow of the poem. Elroy Deimert's "to a younger sister" is refreshingly free of any pretension, yet is an effective evocation of a spirit. Eugene Buck's comparatively lengthy "On the Train" is a vivid piece that suitably captures the feel of a train ride. It is somewhat challenging but well worth the trouble.

It is *Rainbow's* collection of prose fiction that is most controversial. Immediately noticeable as fine prose are Marie Moser's "Scarlet, Scarlet" and "My Jogger", by Greg Hollingshead. Both stories are short though concise, and the limits of length are used to great advantage by these authors.

Somewhat longer is Beno John's "Necessity is the Pimp of Invention," an amusing story detailing the problems of two men looking for ways to collect rent money. Though the prose style of John is self-consciously pretentious and in conflict with the ethnic, street dialect used, the writer's verbiage seems well-controlled, and is a valuable aid to the humor.

Decidedly weak, though not without merit, is "Super Alice Fornari" by Kevin Schole. I don't know what to think of this story of a housewife who dons a costume in mid-afternoon to fight urban problems like

traffic, smoking and dirty buildings. If it's supposed to be funny, it's not. If it's supposed to be surreal, it's not. If it's supposed to be allegorical, it's not. What it is not discernable, and, though only a layman, my desire for literature of this sort to be a little more accessible is not entirely without justification.

There are many other entries in *Gasoline Rainbow*; some that are good and some that are not. But what is most important about the magazine is its existence. The university needs an outlet for its growing number of creative and fiction writers. None of the contributions in *Rainbow* is without at least an indication of real talent in the field, and with subsequent publications the weakest writers are bound to get better. The talent is there; what is needed is the room and the encouragement to continue. If *Gasoline Rainbow* could rid itself of its inflated sense of self-worth, and drop the elements of embarrassing artiness that have plagued it each of its three years, it would certainly become a collector's item.

As it stands now, it's worth owning for the promise it shows, and the hope it gives for the future of local writing.

It's on sale at tables in HUB and neighborhood book stores.

Hits of the Decade: a Gateway series (VII)

To celebrate the end of the series, TWO entries this week! Featured below are the opinions of Edmonton's most formidable musicologist, Taras Ostashevsky.

This list is in alphabetical order.

John Cale Paris 1919 1973

This is John Cale's fourth solo album after leaving Velvet Underground. It was recorded while he was a staff producer for Warner Brothers. Help in recording came from Lowell George and Richard Hayward (both of Little Feat) and the symphony orchestra of UCLA.

This is his most satisfying and literate album—half the tunes rock, while the others are intensely beautiful in a quiet way. It has clean, concise arrangements that construct eerie, atmospheric music.

Captain Beefheart Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller) 1978

His first album since 1974, and now with a new Magic Band, is a joy to hear. In 1969, Beefheart startled everyone with a modern music masterpiece called *Toast Mask Replica* and now, nine years later, he gives us this killer. Captain Beefheart's extraordinary personality is all over this album which is filled with beautiful imagery, great humour and startling arrangements.

Elvis Costello My Aim is True 1977

This is the new wave's most potent songwriter. Costello takes the best music from the 60's and mixes it with his tormented outlook, obsessed with vengeance and guilt, to give us the best of the 70's.

Crazy Horse Crazy Horse 1971

This is a rocking album! Yes this is the band that backs Neil Young. At the time this was recorded Nils Lofgren and Jack Nitzche were still members, as well as current members Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina and the now-deceased Danny Whitten. The album has a great swinging feel that showed the band had great potential to go out beyond their predominantly backing role.

Bob Dylan Blood on the Tracks 1975

If you don't know why this is here by now I certainly will not be able to convince you. A truly important album that re-asserts Dylan's genius and standing as the leading writer in today's rock world.

Kinks Lola Versus Powerman and The Moneygoround Part One 1970

Remember the "British Invasion of the Sixties?" The Kinks came to us then with some classic tunes. These same Kinks, revolving around Ray and Dave Davies, are still putting albums out of consistently great material. They started the decade off with a great single—"Lola (I'm Glad I'm a Man and So Is Lola)" and then followed it up with this album poking fun at the popular music business. As usual, nothing is sacred to Ray Davies and he pokes fun at it all.

God and Clive Davis have saved the Kinks but we better start helping soon.

Little Feat Dixie Chicken 1973

This is their third album and the first with the new-improved expanded band. They play steaming hot funky tunes, most of which are written by leader—Lowell George. This band has never had the popular commercial acceptance that they deserve so I recommend any and all of the LPs.

Bruce Springsteen The Wild, The Innocent and the E-Street Shuffle 1973.

What can I say—this album is great! When I first heard it, I was totalled, devastated and done in!

This came out and a lot of people were saying Springsteen sounds like Dylan or Van Morrison, but mostly he sounds like Springsteen—the hard-knocks street-wise dude. This is his first complete album with the E-Street Band and they played rock-n-roll like they are on fire. They go through incredible changes—from the acoustic "Circus Song," to a jazz-blues "Kitty's Back" to a straight-ahead, no holds barred rocker, "Rosalita (the great rock song of the decade). Springsteen and band are probably the best and most exciting performers in music today.

Tom Waits The Heart of Saturday Nite 1974

Tom Waits almost seems like he came unstuck in time. He belongs to the late fifties. His style is beat-generation super-cool be-bop jazz. All of his songs are filled with small helpless characters who live in sad, drunken worlds. This is another case, where any of a the artist's albums could be picked but this one is a personal favorite.

Neil Young Tonight's the Night 1975

This album was dedicated to two close friends of Neil Young's who both died of drug overdoses.

This is a powerful and magnificent album filled with Neil's very stark and frightening visions. He bared his soul on this unusually real, chilling, uncompromising album. It seemed to serve as a catharsis because after this, he again became much more accessible and pleasant. Certainly not easy listening but worth the time to those who persevere to understand.



Kyra Harper, who appears in Workshop West's newest production, "One Night Stand". The snow opens Wednesday at the Centennial Library Theatre