

Entertainment

Daniel Richler stands up for videos

by Dragos Ruiu

What do you call phoning *CBC's Journal* to talk to the ex-lead singer for the Alpha Jerks (a Quebec punk rock band which would have the lead singer and a stripper disrobe and act out song titles like *When the Whip Comes Out*)? An informal interview with Daniel Richler about his upcoming lecture appearance at SUB Theatre Tuesday night, of course.

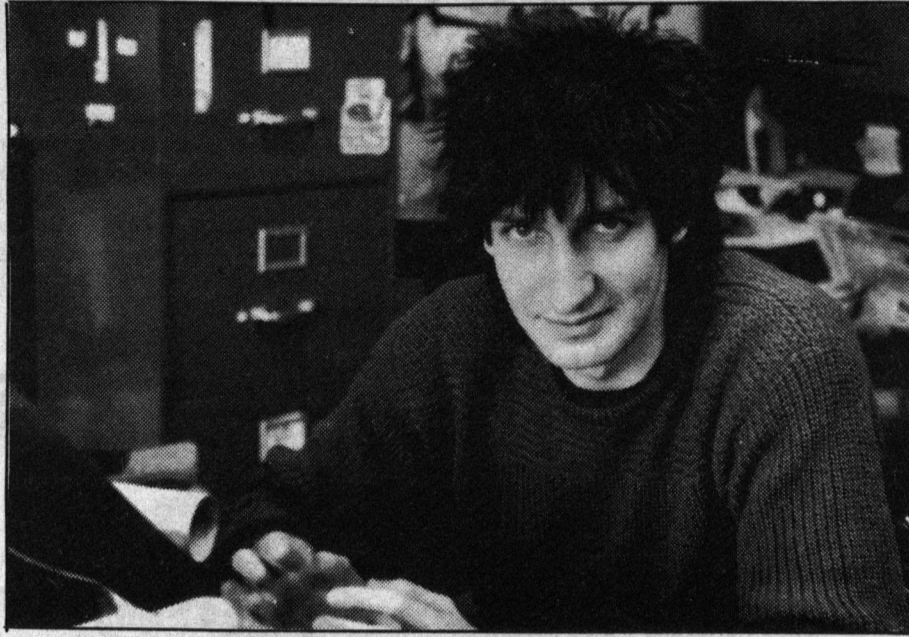
Daniel (son of the famous/infamous Mordecai) has a pretty distinguished history in the media spotlight. Former DJ at several radio stations, he is now a Special Features Reporter for *NewMusic*, *MuchMusic*, Peter Gzowski's *Morning Side*, and *CBC's Journal*, as well as one of the more colourful and intelligent defenders of rock and roll.

Daniel has "always disliked being condescended to by media personalities. So I try to be a regular person when I am on TV. I try to uncosmetize myself, to be the same as I am in real life. If I stumble when I talk, I don't try to cover it up. I'm a regular person and I don't pretend to be any SuperHuman."

"All too many so-called media personalities are mannequins, only reading other people's scripts and willing to shift with any change of format, from 'Phone In Scrabble' one day to 'The Hari-Krishna Hotline' the next, to country music the week after that."

As well as being 'just a regular person', Richler also found himself in the middle of the heated video controversy as co-host of the *NewMusic* (a visionary rock news show which used to be available on ITV here, and which might be back in January, according to ITV). Although Richler will not defend the commercial, violent, and sexist videos which are made to "make a buck", he also does not approve of the various groups that are using their objections against videos to try to censor all of music.

Asked if these sorts of censorship attempts are being made, he responds, "It's



Daniel Richler: 'Just a regular person'

pathetic, but it's true. What they don't realize is that the music is a symptom not the cause.

"Rebellion should be accepted as a natural function of being a teenager. Adults... Big People, parents, are so anxious to erase the memories of their own teen years that they don't count on how traumatic it must be for each new generation."

The industry is not exactly innocent either. "Most people forget that television is made up of Flesh and Blood people with a conscience, but not always such intelligent people. Young people are brought up not to question the authority of what is on TV. Half the time you have this cornucopia of crap plopping on your living room carpet, and you have to go shovel it away." To counteract this, Richler tries to involve his audience.

"People are not accustomed to communicating, they are accustomed to

apathy. I try to address the people, to get them to tell me what they think. It's very important to have 'Interactive Television'. Ideally, everyone could have a black box in their living room, and we could ask 'Canada, what do you think?' This is slowly happening. Shortly, *CityTV* (originator of *NewMusic*) is going to install a camera at the front door where you will be able to press a button and you get a minute to vent your spleen... than at the end of each day, they will edit it and the people will get the opportunities to air their opinions."

As to whether or not videos are a positive influence, Richler is very definite. "Young people have never had a better forum for their opinions. All kinds of groups now have unprecedented access to the national airwaves, and groups from around the corner can now go out and make videos," he says.

Some people have complained that

videos are hurting live music or that 'you have to be pretty to be a rock star these days'. This sounds of "sour grapes" to Richler. "Take someone like Madonna, for instance," he explains, "who had never done any live performances, ever, and then goes and sells out hockey arenas on her first tour."

He recalls feeling ripped off seeing the Cars in the days before videos, "There were rumours they had sent wax mannequins out on tour. I still go by that one. They were playing the identical songs as on their records and they looked like little ants on a matchbox, what were we supposed to do; bask in their live aura? Videos have given some artists a kick in the pants. Live shows now have to be a damn sight better than videos."

About big budget videos, he says, "The best songs don't need more than a lean, performance-style video... For every Duran Duran video, there is also Smiths video that looks like the group slept with the videotape, went in the shower with it, and had a bit of it on their rice crispies. Clearly made for less than fifty dollars, and it is just as exciting."

As for the ill wishes some 'alternative' bands have about videos, he responds, "You can't sit around and be grumpy about it. If you want to be a real political punk, you have to infiltrate from the inside like I did. With imagination you can make videos for cheap. You can back up your sounds with pictures, a two-pronged approach."

Richler strives to get people to think about what they are watching. He will be talking about "Sex, Violence, and Censorship in Rock'n Roll" on Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. Of interest might be interviews with some musicians and the dreaded PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center). The press sheet also lists that he will be showing examples of offensive lyrics and videos. Oh Yeah...

Something Wild, something kinky, something fun



Melanie Griffith: kinky, kooky, yet lovable seductress

Something Wild
Orion Pictures
Cineplex-Odeon West Mall

review by Dragos Ruiu

"Wild Thing. You make my heart sing." beckons the commercial. Well, it has to have some potential. Any movie that has Lou Reed as the commercial soundtrack has to have some potential.

Something Wild has more than potential, it has pizzazz, it has lunacy, it has danger, it has terror, it has a lot of fun. And it has the best reggae/punk/alternative soundtrack EVER. What is even more amazing is that they do not splash this all over the movie posters to try to sucker those extra bucks like some movies. (Did someone say *Modern Girls*?)

The minute you sit down, the sounds and pictures in this movie grab you and hold you until the somewhat cliché ending. The title track is by David Byrne. The music was arranged by Laurie Anderson and John Cale. This movie is directed by Jonathan Demme, who is best known for directing the Talking Heads' film *Stop Making Sense*. On the soundtrack and in the movie you will find X, Oingo Boingo, Fine Young Cannibals, Jean-Michel Jarre, and so many other bands that the music credits are twice as long as the acting and production credits. These names speak for themselves.

Along with these fine, fine sounds, there is some first rate acting. Jeff Daniels (*The Purple Rose of Cairo*) does a superb job of playing the corporate executive/latent rebel/compulsive liar. And Melanie Griffith plays the kinky, kooky, yet lovable seductress. And yes, she does do the obligatory

nude scene (rapidly becoming her trademark).

There is a beautiful scene where Jeff Daniels is handcuffed to a bed (can we say kinky, boys and girls?) and Melanie Griffith phones his boss and gives him the phone. She then proceeds to do naughty things as he tries to lie about not being at work this afternoon. Every person in the theater was on the edge of their seat. The tension was delicious. I got anxious butterflies just watching...

Together the two of them go through an adventure where the fireworks (of one kind or another) rarely stop going off. All this translates into rollicking frolic for the audience. It starts as comedy and ends as a suspense thriller; both are handled commendably.

The whole premise of this movie is that Charlie Driggs (Jeff Daniels) leads a boring corporate life and Lulu (!) (Melanie Griffith) kidnaps him into her own dangerous, chaotic life. Things are all fun until Lulu's husband shows up, fresh from jail. Then the dark, suspenseful side of this movie shows.

It is, in the final analysis, a love story, albeit a strange one. The entire action is punctuated by just the right music. There rarely passes ten minutes without some really excellent song and, furthermore, the soundtrack fits the action. You will not find any songs tossed in on whim either; all the music that is there is there for a reason, because it sets up the mood or represents what is going on.

This is a well-made film. An even better made soundtrack. The Clapometer is well into the red.

"Attempt to be Cool", go see this movie.