

Spoons to stir sound at Burton



Ron Mann: Making film history

Poetry in Motion

Voice music on film

Paula Todd

They say it's fairly easy, if you're talented, to write a successful first novel, but damned near impossible to follow it with something better. If films are anything like novels, Ron Mann has won a stunning victory.

After last year's Festival of Festivals hit, *Imagine the Sound*, a documentary about jazz greats, Mann has produced a second entry for the festival that Kay Armatage, programmer for the New Directions/New Directors series was willing to take "sight unseen."

"Poetry in Motion is a wordy film. You can't really sit back and relax with it. It's about words and the meaning of words," explains Mann. He has filmed artists in action—artists such as Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs who ripped through the hubris of the '50's establishment and vocalized the concerns of an emerging generation. The film is further enhanced by the inclusion of performances by such notables of the revolutionary '60's as Ed Sanders, Diane di Prima, and Ariri Baraka. And some of this decade's poetic greats also appear: Michael Ondaatje, Jim Carroll, John Cage, Charles Bukowski and Robert Creeley. But, impressively, these are but a few of the many poets Mann travelled across North America to film for *Poetry in Motion*.

Mann barely grabbed a breath between the success of his last film and the beginning of the second: "I was at the Edge watching a concert that William Burroughs and John Giorno were giving. I heard John for the first time and he came out and blasted this poem—it was like a performance and I didn't understand that poetry could be so exciting. I turned to a friend and said 'this is my

next film'. That was it."

With *Poetry in Motion*, Mann has in his own words, "made film history." This is the first time such a large group of poets (there are more than 25 in the film) has been caught in performance by a camera.

Mann, 24, has been interested in filmmaking since he was very young and though he spent a year at York, and some time at other universities, he was never a film major. "I once asked Elia Kazan about making films, about what I should take in school. He told me to study everything but film and then go out and make films. That's what I've done."

The film has its world premiere this Friday, September 17 at 7:00 p.m. at the Bloor Cinema. Viewers can look forward to a filmic anthology that is as much an experience for its audience as it was for its participants.

Paula Todd

It's a long way from Burlington's Aldershot High and a school band to England's Air Studios and vocal sessions in the sacred halls frequented by the likes of Paul McCartney, the Pretenders and Japan. But it's a trip four young musicians have made in a short couple of years and, the record buyers willing, the first steps in the arduous journey to music stardom.

The Spoons are just back from two weeks in the heart of London, England where they mixed their latest LP, *Arias and Symphonies*, under the resolute guidance of British producer, John Punter (Brian Ferry, Roxy Music, Japan and Nazareth), who discovered their sound while he was driving around the British countryside with their demo tape playing in his car.

"London was alright," says Sandy Horne, bass player and only female member of the band, "but expensive and I had my wallet stolen with about £49 and my I.D. Thank God, I still had my passport."

These young "on the verge of making it big" songsters are squeezing a York University gig into a sardine can of a tour that includes universities in Hamilton, Guelph,

Ottawa, Kingston, and Ryerson in T.O.

They'll probably never shake their reputation as "wide-eyed innocents" that the press plays up, but despite their youth, Gord Deppe (23), Derrick Ross (21), Sandy Horne (20) and Rob Preuss (16 and finishing high school via correspondence courses), have a sound sophisticated enough to have attracted an international distributor: A&M and hometown label Ready Records are busy churning out the pop pulp that feeds the press machines.

"We cut 1,000 copies of the first single, *After the Institution*, and took it around ourselves. Sam's wouldn't take it though and we didn't do any further pressings," recalls Horne.

Things have definitely changed. Their e.p. *Nova Heart* has already sold 25,000 copies in Canada and is no. 10 on the Vancouver charts and still climbing.

The new album will have an initial North American run of far more.

Deppe has been writing all the songs on his guitar, though the latest LP has the rest of the band moving in on his turf and Horne hopes her background in computer programming will begin to influence their material.

Their meteoric movement in the business probably has some young hopefuls wondering what this band has that is setting them apart. Lucking into the good graces of John Punter will head the list of components in their success. But their music is obviously hitting a responsive chord in listeners. And they are incredibly enthusiastic which publicists and audiences alike are picking up on.

The decision to call the band, the Spoons, was fortuitous, much like their notoriety: "Gord and Brett (their ex-keyboard player) were eating alphabet soup and thinking about a name. Gord looked down at his soup and said, 'why not the spoons?'," explains Horne. They liked the name because it was simple, easy to remember, the name of an inanimate object and had no overtones of either sex or violence. "Like the Beatles," says Horne, "you don't think of bugs when you hear that." They're hoping you won't think of cutlery.

Their show tonight is the first time in many years that Burton Auditorium will revel in the attention of current musicians; and this will be the last time to catch the Spoons before they're off to New York.

Reflecting upon his contribution to the film, Christopher Dewdney, a prolific Canadian poet said: "The performance possibilities have given me new things to think about. The film is a tremendous assemblage of really diverse material. It was very exciting especially since Ron had already filmed a lot of American poets that I really like. I got off on the whole idea."

Dewdney has given many readings before, but admits working with the camera was slightly intimidating: "It was a whole different situation. I was a novice. I got more relaxed though."

Mann has taken a step toward renewing the oral tradition and expanding the boundaries of the genre. Asked why he wanted to make the film, he said, "Because nobody had."

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