

The arts

Fleet of foot but still stumbling

The Quicksilver Messenger Service, one of the original San Francisco bands from the flower power days of '67, achieved respect with the lean, energetic guitar work of its first two albums (*Quicksilver* and *Happy Trails*). The addition of vocalist Dino Valenti and pianist Nicky Hopkins gave a more interesting, fuller dimension to the Quicksilver band. However, under the inept domination of the same Valenti, and with subsequent personnel changes, Quicksilver fell apart after several fair to poor quality albums.

Now after a few futile years of trying to form new bands (John Cipollina's *Copperhead*) and attempting to become integrated into the bands of friends (David Frieberg in Jefferson Starship) Quicksilver is back...right where they left off.

Sure there are subtle new touches: zesty female back-up vocals; tasteful synthesizer noises in order to sound more like a seventies band; even some competent studio help from Pete Sears (of Starship) and old friend Nicky Hopkins.

It is too bad, though, that in reforming, Quicksilver still hasn't learned to contend with its main problem - Dino Valenti and his inseparable lack of ego control. Don't get me wrong, I don't dislike Dino; his voice is great in harmony and back-up vocals (*Gypsy Lights*) and some of his composing is not bad (*The Letter* and *Witchesmoon*); but really he's not a blues-man. His horrendous job of semi-grooving the words to *Worrying Shoes* isn't even an amusing

parody. Or how about his honest-to-gosh old west humility in *Cowboy on the Run*. A freeway flyer maybe, but "I'm just a cowboy on the run"? He also has the annoying habit of lyrical exaggeration, (I've been trying to contact you for a hundred-thousand years") for the sake of making his words rhyme.

No, just because the best song on the album (*They don't know*) has no trace of Dino Valenti, it doesn't mean that Quicksilver can get along without him (as a matter of fact, Dino can be an important asset to the group, as he was in the *Just for Love* album).

Unfortunately Quicksilver will be unable to be consistently good (and they have the ability) unless they can restrain Dino and his ego aggressiveness.

Rod Allan

Intrigue, humour, and homosexuals spotlighted

For those who enjoy live theatre, the new year is being ushered in by what promises to be a lively and entertaining month.

Six new plays will begin running in January. The first of these is *Busybody* by Jack Popplewell, which will begin its run at Stage West tomorrow (the 7th) and play through until February 8. Billed as a "hilarious mystery-comedy," it looks like the typical light entertainment Stage West offers.

Then on January 12, *Hosanna* by Michel Tremblay opens at Citadel Too. As is common with Tremblay's material, this is listed "for mature audiences only" and is centred around two main characters, both of whom are homosexuals. *Hosanna* will run for two weeks.

On January 16 until 25, two other plays by Tremblay will run in Edmonton - only this time they will be presented in the original French versions. The plays, *En Pieces Detachees* and *La Duchesse de Langeais*, will be presented by Theatre Francais d'Edmonton (469-0829) in the College St. Jean auditorium.



The old order must give way to a new year of expectations

Walterdale will open the new year with *Relatively Speaking* by Alan Ayckbourn, running January 20-31 inclusive. This will be a fast, punny play and will be directed by one of Walterdale's experienced people, Frank Glenfield.

The final piece of live theatre to begin during January will be a play which has become a classic of this century - *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. Now 30 years old, the play is very well-known; it is being played by Theatre 3 and will run from January 27 to February 7.



He who calls the tune faces the music

Face the Music is plateau period E.L.O.

Electric Light Orchestra I was a debut album from a group in transition; there were still strong influences from the Move albums due to the eclecticism of Roy Wood. *E.L.O. II* showed a strong stylistic shift to the George Martin string sound of *Strawberry Fields* period Beatles. *On the Third Day* established E.L.O. as capable of maintaining and extending this style, which reached its musical and commercial peak at the impetuous conceptualization of their much awaited fourth album, *Eldorado*.

Now we have *Face the Music* which is neither a step forward nor backward. Musically, it is on the same level with *Eldorado*. It contains competent E.L.O. style rockers such as *Poker* and *Evil Woman*, *Waterfall*, *Strange Magic* and *One Summer Dream* show the strings capable of also providing a lush, softer sound.

Group leader, composer and arranger, Jeff Lynne has kept basically the same production as previous albums but has added female vocalists to good effect on some cuts (*Evil Woman* and *Down Home Town*).

Lyrical, Lynne's words

have gone from the raunch and forcefulness of *On the Third Day* to blaten pretentiousness in *Eldorado* to a mixture of mysticism (*Strange Magic*) and banality (*Poker*). He even resorts to various tired cliches, as in *Evil Woman* ("a fool and his money soon go separate ways" and "you made the wine now you drink a cup").

Basically *Face the Music* is merely an extension of *Eldorado* with less pretense. This means that E.L.O. is faced with the possibility of falling into the artistic rut which waits for artists who rely on formula music (most notably middle

period Elton John).

Unfortunately E.L.O. lacks the mass acceptance of Elton, which would carry them financially through these musical doldrums.

The only cut which does show some originality is *Down Home Town* which uses fiddles for the string section and it seems strongly out of place in context with the rest of the album. The next album by this group will be a fairly crucial one, either leaving the group in stagnation or breaking ground to determine a new future for E.L.O.

by Rod Allan

BOOKS

On local murders...

A Matrix of Evidence by Bruce M. Olsen Pacific Coast Publishing Ltd., \$11.95, 235 pp.

About four years back, there was a rather sensational murder in the city of Edmonton. On June 13 1971 Robert Neville, a travel agent, was found shot to death in his office in downtown Edmonton. Keith Latta, a law professor and business partner of Neville's from Kingston, Ontario, was subsequently charged with non-capital murder, found guilty, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Bruce Olsen, the author of *A Matrix of Evidence* was working at William Head Federal Penitentiary, BC, when he first met Latta. Time passed, their friendship grew, and so did Olsen's interest in this strange little man who still professed innocence. The incredible tale that unravelled and Olsen's

eventual belief that Latta was telling the truth, that he was innocent, led him to research and write the book *A Matrix of Evidence*.

Apparently there was a trial with an inept defense (Latta never took the stand) and a dramatic prosecution armed with sketchy circumstantial evidence. This was combined with a police investigation which now appears to be shoddy, if not prejudiced.

But the true story only really begins after Latta's imprisonment. One year after his conviction, Latta announced that he had been in the office that Sunday morning (contrary to what he submitted in the trial) and that he had actually witnessed the murder of Neville.

Since then, a 'Brazilian connection' has surfaced along with hints from Neville's former girlfriend that he had incurred a \$30,000 gambling debt. Aha - a

tract' taken out on his life - out in Edmonton?

First let me comment on the book itself. Lately, I have found myself indulging in huge doses of fiction under the pretext that only fiction could offer the style and emotional impact proper to a free-wielding imagination. Strangely enough, *A Matrix of Evidence*, as a work of non-fiction, manages to approach intricacies of plot through certain trail sequences and bizarre developments in evidence that rivals imaginative qualities in old-time 'thrillers'.

In *A Matrix of Evidence*, the 'thrill', if it can be described as such, is the realization of the stark reality that passes before the reader's eyes. Latta, the accused, still sits in a penitentiary awaiting notice of retrial. Familiarity with local hotels, streets, and parks mentioned in the book gives the reader a heightened sense of reality. It is Latta staying in the Edmonton Inn. It is the murder scene beside the Corona Hotel. It is Mayfair Park where the gun was found. The only question is, just how much credit is due to

continued on page 8

...and the demise of a peaceful, unique people

Pitseolak, Peter. *People From Our Side*. Hurtig Publishers. 166 pp. \$8.95 Paper/\$12.50 Cloth.

This is the story of the 'Inuit' people - the 'only people' ... and of a culture which has passed away. It is told in a simple manner by one of the Inuit themselves, Peter Pitseolak - a man whose ability to discern and relate historically significant events of his life provide us with a moving account of the disappearance of a society.

The account is of the people of 'Seekooseelak' or 'no ice', meaning that area around Cape Dorset, Baffin Island where there is no ice at break-up time. The book is a collection of some of the different written, oral, and photographic materials of Peter Pitseolak and it follows the general outlines of an autobiography, ending with an evaluation of the state of the Inuit people in 1972, one year before Pitseolak's death.

The story is generally one of Pitseolak's life but, indirectly, one of his people. Like the Toonik people of the Dorset culture who were swallowed up by another Eskimo culture in the fourteenth century, Pitseolak's people were, in his eyes, swallowed up by the encroachments of the 'kagluna' or 'white man', in the twentieth. Pitseolak was aware that his life spanned an era between two cultures and strongly felt the need to record both that life story and his final sadness at the disappearance of a traditional way of life.

"I'm happy about having white man's food when you want it, and I'm happy about having a place to live where the heat is always the same ... But it's not happier living in today's world. Today the Eskimos are not so poor, but long ago I never saw grown-ups fighting ... I

continued on page 8