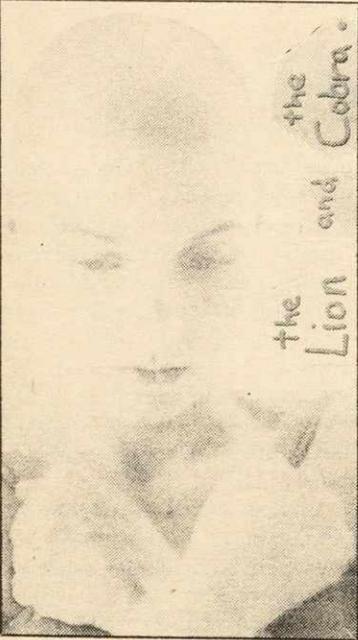


NEW RELEASES

Sinead O'Connor: The Lion and the Cobra

by Tonë Meeg

Those music fans who saw Sinead O'Connor's video "Troy" on TV recently are probably as happy as I am for the album *The Lion and the Cobra* (Chrysalis/MCA) to come to the record stores a couple of weeks ago. If you don't have it yet, I strongly recommend that you buy it. This is the best album I've heard since discovering the Throwing Muses last year. For those who haven't listened to any of her music yet, I'll tell you how superb she is and why, but I won't compare this album to any other — her sound is unique.



The Lion and the Cobra is Sinead's first album; her powerful vocals are just the beginning of her role in putting this record

together. She wrote all but one song, produced it, and worked on arranging all of the titles. She was also pregnant at the time. This woman has a lot of energy!

There is a refreshing variety of styles on this album. The arty drama of songs like "Troy" are balanced with a few good pop tunes ("Mandika" is a good one), a dose of electric guitar & synthesizer rock ("Jerusalem") and the beauty of an Irish ballad or two ("Never Get Old"). It is Sinead's ability to sustain so many distinct styles that makes this album so tempting to listen to (over and over). You don't have to be in a specific mood to put on the album, because she doesn't focus on only one sound like a band such as Cocteau Twins tend to do.

The strength of the music is at least equal to the power of Sinead's voice. She maintains a remarkable vocal range that is difficult to describe with simple adjectives so I'll use a simile (are you ready?). Imagine that Sinead's voice is like a bird that is ascending higher and higher up the vocal scale, and then suddenly with no warning swoops down the scale at an alarming rate. This takes place within the space of fifteen beats! Incredible, you say... listen to the album and you'll know what I mean.

Each song has an interesting story or feeling behind it: of relationships, love and/or lust, politics, and folklore. Listen to her lyrics, her music, and her voice; this exceptionally talented artist is well worth the time.

Clannad: Sirius

by Scott Neily

The Irish band Clannad have just released their entry into the 1988 music scene, *Sirius* (BMG/RCA). Although the band (composed of siblings Maire, Ciaran, and Pol Brennan, and their twin uncles Noel and Padrag Duggan — clannad means family in Gaelic) has been releasing records for some time and have enjoyed a fair amount of popularity in their native Ireland, it was not until the single "In a Lifetime" was released off their 1986 album *Macalla* that they began to gain international recognition. Although the song had some excellent, haunting qualities by itself, it was the presence of U2's Bono that gave the tune the intensity to make it as a chartable single.

Evidently, the band has taken a liking to international success. Their new album definitely has

more of a rock feel to it, which could make them reasonably accessible for AOR and MOR radio programming. While *Sirius* does follow the general sound of the rock tunes found on *Macalla*, the absence of the Celtic influences that the band has long been known for is rather annoying. There are only two songs on *Sirius* that feature Gaelic in the lyrics, and the entire album features music that is essentially mellow rock, not much different from what is found on every radio station in the country.

While Maire's voice is as beautiful as ever, the basic similarity of the songs somehow lessens the impact of her excellent vocals. An enjoyable album for background music, a lyric in the song "Many Roads" nicely sums up the band's direction on *Sirius*: "... many roads lead to nowhere/and all the places look the same ..."

Pop that sparkles

by Scott Neily

Although the population of Canada is relatively small, it is not hard to find Canadian talent, and Québec native Michael Breen is an excellent example of that fact. Raised in Nicolet, Breen began playing guitar when he was 13, but did not join a band until he was 22. After moving to Montréal, he found playing in a group was not exactly conducive to his songwriting abilities, so he left and began to concentrate on his own material.

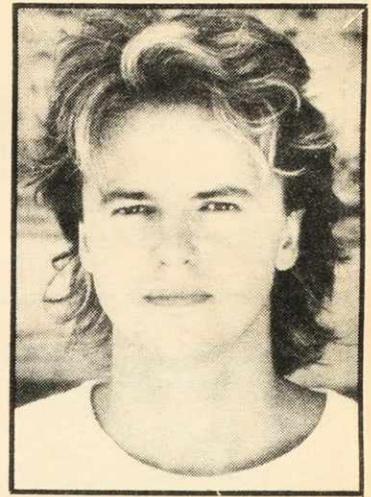
Multi-talented Breen wrote all the music on his self-titled debut album from Alert Records, and played many of the instruments, too — guitar, keyboards, and drum programming included. The first single, "Rain", scored high on music charts across the country, and the second single, "How Will I Know", is making respectable progress. "I asked Tom Berry, my manager, to release this song because it's a passionate song for me," says Breen. "It was a bit to please me, because I knew this song wasn't like 'Rain'. It's doing well and it'll grab an audience for sure, but it's not as obvious."

Breen considers himself to be one of those songwriters who relies heavily on instinct when it comes to songwriting. Although he would prefer the luxury of being able to write entirely in the studio, like Eurythmics' Dave Stewart, he feels it is very important, though difficult, to carry the original intensity of a demo of a song into a recording session. He went into the studio armed with ten songs for his record, but ended up setting five aside, favouring songs written shortly before or during the recording of the album. "I'm a really instinctive person. The thing is that you have to be true to yourself if you feel for a song. Call it what you want, studio or emotion instinct, it's the same thing," Breen notes. "Sometimes you can never relive the spirit and the feeling of the original demo version of the song, or recapture the intensity of a song you may have written a year ago or more. I find it very hard to go back and redo a song that you've already put everything into — it's too mechanical. You need that adrenalin rush. I think there's a greater purity in recording that way."

Breen has his own 8-track recording studio where he writes much of his material. Although he prefers to write alone, he finds that the isolation is not always helpful. "When I was working on the demo to get a deal, it was like, 'What's going on outside my studio?' I didn't listen to much other music because I didn't want to be too influenced by others. I wanted to be the most I could, to stick to my roots," he says. "It's great, because when

you don't have the opportunity to surround yourself with other musicians you can be your own sideman. It gives you flexibility. But when you're alone, the thing is, you have nobody to give you feedback, to bounce ideas off of. Sometimes you need that extra spark to make it click, that chemistry. But the main advantage is that you don't have to fight others to get the song just the way you want!"

Variety is the keyword when it comes to describing Breen's debut album. Ranging from the danceable "So Long" and the ringing guitars of "Face to Face" to the high-energy "SOS Emotion" and the power of "How Will I Know", the album covers a myriad of styles that are prominent in today's music scene. Although the music can be easily termed "commercial", Breen's endurance and passion underline the basic quality of the



Michael Breen: No longer out in the rain

album. Although he is not consciously trying to follow in the footsteps of Bryan Adams and Corey Hart, Breen is definitely in the same category and will likely become one of Canada's more visible pop stars.

Michael Breen is currently touring Eastern Canada and will be showcasing at the Crazy Horse until February 14.

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However, the jigsaw puzzle format requires close attention be paid on the part of the audience and the presentation subtly draws the viewer into the story. By the end of the first act, the pieces of the puzzle fall neatly into place and the audience is given a few clues as to the possible outcome of the story. Although the soap-opera events in the play can be somewhat shocking because of the intense, brutal realism, the dialogue and actions are not really offensive

because of their basic familiarity. Because of the simple plot line, saying any more could give away the ending.

Overall, the production was very well done. The acting was good all around, and Geoff McBride as Skelly, the town hermit, gave an exceptional performance. The set was almost surreal and the telephone pole in the centre of the stage acted as a focus for the lonely, isolated feel of the town and its characters.

As a demonstration of the talent in the Theatre department, *The Rimers of Eldritch* is excellent. The play is running until Feb. 14th in Studio One.