

Christie chucks cookies eastward

by Michael Dennis
Edmund Fenwick Serious

**Triumph of the Will:
Doug Christie Live
(West-Concept SEP-R8)**

It's entirely possible that this album, recorded at last month's Edmonton concert, could do for Christie what *Frampton Comes Alive* did for Peter Frampton: catapult a hitherto obscure performer into the spotlight (with an equally-precipitous slick back into the sludge to follow soon after).

Christie certainly fits the first part of the bill. Until the Edmonton show, with its resultant national publicity, Christie was virtually unknown, even within his home province of British Columbia (a jurisdiction which has produced more than its share of bizarre sideshows). His success in Alberta's capital is made even more confusing by the fact that, with the exception of some of the more off-the-wall punk bands, nobody uses the hysterical, pyrotechnical style anymore.

Pyrotechnics are what you get on this album, though. From the opening number (a slightly derivative version of the '70's hit *I'm Mad as Hell and I'm Not Going to Take It Anymore*) to the final chords of *Sure, I'm Serious*, Christie bellows, screams and wails in a fashion that would put James Brown to shame. A perfunctory listener would dismiss this album as yet another case of form without substance.

Such is not the case, though: these songs contain plenty of substance, although little of it is palatable. I sometimes wonder if the audience at the Jubilee was actually listening to the lyrics of the songs like *Take the West and Leave the Rest*, *The White Anglo Stomp* or *The Ballad of the Standard Oil Trust*. Give Christie credit for this much: his material is well-written and very slickly presented.

Although in the final analysis this album contains about as much spontaneity and originality as a Barry Manilow record, the audience was completely taken in by Christie's *neuveau-evangeliste* style and his off-beat (but dangerous) message. Whether Christie's argument will stand up to repeated airing is questionable.

There is one song on this album, though, that makes for interesting listening, and could provide Christie with a hit single. The powerful anthem *Give Me Freedom or Give Me Money (Whichever is Easiest)*, a powerhouse rocker that starts out Side 2, could well become a rallying-cry for Christie's fans. The sheer energy contained in this performance could cause the rest of Canada to sit up and take notice as well, although the critics are sure to pick on the lyrics, with their shame-faced materialism.

It is the materialism, pervading the album as it does, that ultimately destroys the rest of Christie's carefully-prepared images, and suggests the man from Victoria may have a long way to go before he can attain the critical and popular success of an established performer like Rene Levesque. Even though Levesque's popularity is more or less confined to the Quebec market, and despite the disappointing reception afforded his latest album *What's One Referendu, Anyway?*, Levesque still has a charisma, a power to entrance, that Christie lacks. And the fact that Christie disapproves of Levesque's language, a language of the heart, shows that Doug Christie still has a lot to learn about the business he's chosen for himself.

**Let's Stick Together
Nick Taylor
(Small L Lib 1980's)**

Nick Taylor, one of the opening acts at Christie's Edmonton Concert, has



Frontman Doug Christie only allowed us to photograph his right side during his encore at the jubilee. His next album is tentatively called *Operation Baubarossa*.

released his own live recording of the evening. Unfortunately, the sound quality on *Let's Stick Together* (small L lib 1980'a) is atrocious; it's almost impossi-

ble to hear Taylor at all. Like all of Taylor's other recordings, *Let's Stick Together* was remaindered immediately upon release.

Handel's *Messiah* season sleeper

by Josephine S. Bach

Outside it was cold, but inside the Jubilee Auditorium last Friday and Saturday nights, all the people slept.

They were lulled senseless by the innumerable arias and recitatives of Handel's *Messiah*.

The *Messiah* — the performance of which is to awakenedness what Roloids are to gas, which was, until the advent of Sominex, the leading sleeping potion for the masses and the church alike, whose 53-odd parts, the number of which depends on the performers' whims are 52 too many — was performed once again by the Edmonton Symphony and the Richard Eaton Singers along with four local soloists.

Called the "Grand Oratorio", Handel proved (although this is not quite what he had in mind) that quality is inversely related to quantity. Christians around the world celebrate the mammoth performance of the *Messiah* at Christmas time; in fact, it has become as important as many other Christian customs: fasting, for example, or getting up early on cold, wintry mornings to stand with hundreds of others in gaudy churches, gagging on thick incense, or listening to self-righteous pseudo-philosophers spout the conventional beliefs.

History records that the *Messiah* was written in all of 24 days by Handel, who was fighting off debt-collectors constantly. Now the oratorio is hailed as a spiritual masterpiece, but any half-wit knows Handel was interested only in its financial merit.

Another evidence of the spiritual

myth is the custom of standing up for the Hallelujah chorus. The custom predates to 1742 when King George II, suffering from gas pains, stood up to relieve himself during the said movement.

The audience, some of whom were jarred awake by this royal gesture, has imitated it ever since. And so, in last weekend's performance, the audience, like Pavlov's dogs, obediently stood up during the Hallelujah.

The grand irony is, however, that the 'monarchists' aren't Christian at all; if they truly believed that all men were created equal, they wouldn't be slavering after Kings and Queens, and what not, at least not unless they were Anglicans.

Given the contradictions in Handel's oratorio, it isn't surprising the performances last weekend were less than inspiring.

The Symphony, decimated and thus dwarfed by the Eaton singers, was merely adequate. If French horns had been scored for the work, the orchestra would have not risen above the dreadful and horrid.

The Eaton singers — well, with so many of them, how could one tell — at least they didn't all screw up at the same time. (But they were so precariously perched on the stage that one soon forgot their singing and waited expectantly for one clumsy bumbler to fall, starting a domino effect.)

Of the soloists, Baritone Harold Weins sometime U of A music professor, stood out; although not particularly good, when accompanied by trumpet in his last recitative, he was tolerable. We sympathize with Harold, though, because he had a cold all week long, and besides, I need an extra stanine.



Ho Ho Ho ... Paramedics were kept busy dealing with the casualties at Saturday evening's performance. Dozens suffered terminal boredom; city council moves to ban further symphony concerts.