

# Bob Wiseman good, if not categorizable on album...

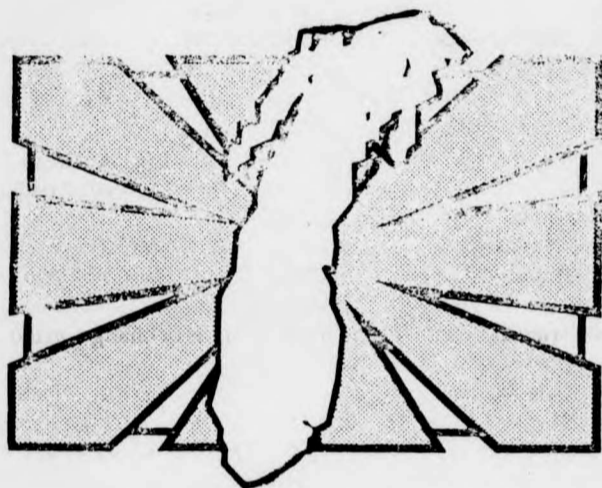
by David Kuswanto

Bob Wiseman is usually known as "the guy who plays keyboards for Blue Rodeo." But he is also an independent record producer and singer/songwriter with a new solo album. *Presented by Lake Michigan Soda* is his second release, one of unquestionable worth.

Clearly this is not a Blue Rodeo record. Far from it. There are no polished pop songs here and the famous Keelor/Cuddy vocal harmonies are nowhere to be found, so don't bother looking. Instead, sit back, relax and listen to Wiseman's scratchy pubescent whines as he boldly takes you where no one has gone before.

Being a concerned and well-informed artist, Wiseman tends to write songs on political and environmental issues, as the album demonstrates. However, Wiseman is also a softie, and seems equally involved with matters of the heart, particularly those old love-and-yearning standards.

## Lake Michigan Soda



## ...and frenzied, but funny in concert with Andrew Cash

By Ron Skinner

No, my friends, acoustic music is not dead. I can truthfully say this after attending a concert this past Friday at the legendary Bohemian Embassy.

Knowing the number of procrastinators in this city, I arrived, lucky to find two tickets available. Before long, this most benevolent venue was filled to capacity with an anxious crowd to see a concert billed as a "four in one:" Bob Wiseman, Andrew Cash, Robert Priest and Leanne Haze. All four would play solo stints on acoustic guitars, with Wiseman going back and forth between piano and guitar.

Leanne Haze crept on the stage, playing a set of original works with musical references ranging from Hindu gods to Mohawk Warriors. She set the tone for the night's overall strength — the updating of basic folk song arrangements.

Robert Priest's performance was a mixture of poetic forms and witty sarcasms, aimed at all of those dumb things in this "perfect" world of ours. He contributed his share of angst to the evening with songs like "G.I. Joe, The Great American Zero," and "My Earth Friendly Shopping Bag," a song about how people fool themselves by placing their faith in novelty causes. Thank god (*god??*) not all the baby boomers sold out, some even retaining their "Rebel Pose."

Andrew Cash, his guitar strapped over one shoulder, resembled Tom

## MUSIC

Bob Wiseman  
Presented by Lake Michigan Soda  
WEA

Thus, we get everything from your dead serious six o'clock news reports ("Another obscure death in the history of the American Indian Movement [AIM]") to the gentlest of laments, "Me an Arrow." Various comedic asides between songs give the audience a break from the intensity of the music.

Admittedly, Wiseman's alternative and experimental tendencies occasionally get in the way of the songs. For instance, the tape loops and effects on "Frost in Florida" make the song unlistenable and unattractive. But on the whole, Wiseman uses the imperfections to his advantage. And anyways, after writing, producing and playing about half a dozen instruments on the record, you're bound to miss a beat or two.

Other than to say it's very good, this album is difficult to categorize, as it draws from different schools and styles. *Presented by Lake Michigan Soda* probably isn't for everyone, and it does take some time to digest, but good things often do.

And don't let titles like "Diary of a U.S. crop-dusting pilot spraying the defoliant tebuthiuron (spike) on coca plantations in the upper huallaga valley [Peru]" bother you none. You get used to 'em.

Waits. He seemed to loathe the limelight at first, but came booming out of it.

Cash gave a gut-wrenching performance, playing acoustic versions of his songs, most of which were arranged for a rock and roll band. At times he seemed looking for help from his absent band; but Cash pulled through with beautiful, emotionally charged ballads. His rendition of "Waltzing Matilda" was truly exceptional.

Where Andrew Cash seemed slightly limited without his backing band, Bob Wiseman thrived doing solo work away from his full-time position as Blue Rodeo's pianist. Suddenly stepping to the piano during the dying moments of intermission, Wiseman began his madness of improvisations. He banged out what looked like a frenzied selection of notes, but sounded painstakingly phrased beforehand.

Halfway through his set, Wiseman's guitar went out of tune. His guitar tuner wouldn't work for him, immediately putting him on the spot. "Just think," Wiseman said, "I might have to use my own mind for once."



# Madonna and O'Connor blend badly to produce Banderas

by Kathryn Bailey

## MUSIC

Banderas  
Ripe  
London Records/Polygram

Two women who looked like Madonna and sounded like Sinead O'Connor would go far in today's music industry. But, what can one do with two women who look like Sinead O'Connor and sound like Madonna?

This is the problem Caroline Buckley and Sally Herbert, the two nearly bald female members of Banderas, have on their debut album, *Ripe*. The entire album is saturated with airy, if slightly more stylized and refined, Madonnaesque vocals. If Banderas is a bit more respectable than Madonna, it may be because they have the benefit of the British music industry behind them.

The first single by the band to make the charts in Britain, "This is Your Life," featured Electronic — Johnny Marr (was he really ever in The Smiths?) and Bernard Sumner. You shouldn't buy the album if you are a big fan of either artist, though: you would never notice Marr's guitars or Sumner's backing vocals if it weren't for the tiny credits on the

inner sleeve. Sadly, these tiny credits are probably the only reason Banderas made it onto the charts.

Another example is "Why Aren't You In Love With Me?" Jimmy Sommerville, who used to employ Buckley and Herbert as back-up singers, supplies backing vocals for the song. But one has to pry his vocals from the overpowering mass of synthesized sound.

"All the songs sound the same." It has been said of so many albums before, but never has it been more true than on *Ripe*. Sure, if you have a thing for quivering, Madonnaish vocals, groovy discofied tunes featuring the same drum program throughout and romantic love lyrics that are "so true" when sung in a sappy attempt at soul, you might like Banderas.

But for me, *Ripe* goes rotten after the first listen.

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