

Old but looking sharp

Thursday Thursday

Record review by John C. Bilisland

Following the release of his debut album, *Look Sharp*, Joe Jackson was promptly dismissed by several critics as yet another, third-rate imitation of Elvis Costello. They blamed him for drawing heavily upon Costello's musical style without having the imaginative and perceptive lyrics that characterized Costello's best work. Such criticism is unfair. Though Jackson cannot claim to have broken new ground with the album, neither can this claim be made by any of those working within the New Wave genre, with the exception of a handful of avant-garde artists (Elvis Costello, Talking Heads, Graham Parker).

Indeed, the music of all New Wave is a derivative of early British rock and roll, borrowing from the styles and forms set down by such bands as the Kinks, the Rolling Stones and the Who. Jackson is the first to acknowledge his debt to the forerunners of New Wave, while speaking of his own music as only that of a "spiv-rocker."* Nevertheless, Jackson's music is certainly worthwhile, offering a blend of sensitive lyrics and energetic tunes.

On *Look Sharp*, Jackson handles the vocals, piano and harmonica, while backed by Gary Sanford on guitar, Dave Houghton on drums and Graham Maby on bass. In the composition and arrangement of the eleven pieces Jackson shows himself capable of writing appealing, yet imaginative melodies that mirror the sentiments of the lyrics.

The band provides solid backing for Jackson, performing extremely well on three of the tracks, "Throw It Away", "Pretty Girls," and "Look Sharp." Maby's work on bass guitar is by far the most interesting element of the band's music: the melodic bass line is given both expression and vitality without the primal "thump-thump" hindering most bass parts in rock and roll. When allowed their few brief solos, Sanford and Houghton prove to be competent musicians. However, the lead guitar, percussion, and Jackson's piano are often relegated to nondescript, harmonizing roles, leaving Jackson's powerful vocals and Maby's bass to carry the melody as best they can. One would hope that this problem in arrangement will be corrected in Jackson's new album *I'm The Man*. (already released).

Few of the subjects treated in *Look Sharp* are novel: the rage of a spurned lover, alienation in modern life, etc. are the common themes. However, Jackson's fresh perspective prevents the songs from becoming tedious reworkings of well-worn themes. This freshness is especially important in "Pretty Girls". Jackson borrows heavily from the music, lyrics, and even title, of Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman". But, while girl-watching provides a pleasant diversion for Orbison, it is a source of agitation for Jackson, culminating in his final plea:

*God if You're up there,
Listen to my prayer,
In future man should have a different design.
Give him a switch so he can turn off his libido,
Give him a tranquilizer built into his mind.*

In "Sunday Papers" and "Throw It Away", Jackson examines the individual's isolation resulting from modern, total-media bombardment. "Sunday Papers" deals with Britain's scandal sheets and their readers. These "tabloids" print cruel exposes and distorted commentaries on the more shocking current events, relying on a selective use of facts and vicious editorializing. As Jackson is quick to note, the tabloids are pernicious not only because of their manipulation of facts, but also because of their substitution of the informative with the controversial. Thus, the ignorant

and narrow-minded reader-personified by the song's crippled, spastic, hag — is left with his biases and ignorance intact, while passing judgement on everything imaginable.

The complexity and dismal nature of current affairs and the attendant helplessness and pessimism of the individual is examined in "Throw It Away". The rejection of international problems, the status quo and the work ethic is "effected" by simply throwing away the newspaper. However, this retreat from society's ills cannot be completed without an accompanying withdrawal from society itself; all of which leads to the same isolation and ignorance condemned in "Sunday Papers."



One of the most attractive qualities of Jackson's songwriting is the taut self-awareness infused into the lyrics, especially noticeable in "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" Within a single verse the persona admits the flaws in his own appearance only to turn and ridicule another for such flaws:

*I wash my hair
And I kid myself I look real smooth.
Look over there . . . where?
Here comes Jeannie with her new boyfriend.
They say that looks don't count for much.
So there goes your proof.*

The fact that Jackson can distinguish such hypocrisy in the spurned lover, and hence himself, is indicative of his perception and sensitivity. These qualities combined with a sound understanding of the limitations and possibilities of New Wave make Jackson a talent well worth watching in the years ahead.

* a spiv being a "... shady character who avoids honest work and lives by his wits ..." O.E.D.

CINEMA SUB Theatre

Oct. 25, *Casablanca*, Bogart's big one.
October 28, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, one of the all time great films by one of the masters.
Provincial Museum, 12845 - 102 Ave.
Oct. 28, 4 and 7 pm, *The Maltese Falcon*. Admission to this and other films shown at the museum is free.

MUSIC Orange Hall, 104 St. 84 Ave.

Oct. 27, 8 pm. The South-Side Folk Club presents two performers from across the water, Gaberlunzie from Scotland and Jacques LePendu from Brittany. This will be the fourth Canadian tour for Gaberlunzie. LePendu sings songs from Brittany and France and accompanies himself on flute and dulcimer. Tickets are available from Keen Kraft Music and from Scottish Imports. For more information call 475-2260 or 475-1042.

SUB Theatre
Oct. 26, 8 pm, Oct. 27, 1 pm. Students' Union Concerts present a prairie institution, the Dump-trucks. Tickets are available at the HUB Box Office.
Jubilee Auditorium

Oct. 31, 8:30 pm Students' Union Concerts present Sarah Vaughn. Tickets are \$9, \$10 and \$11.50.
Palms Cafe, 10010-102 St.

Oct. 30 - Nov. 3, 8:30 pm. He was here last year and blew everybody away, so there's no reason why he shouldn't do it again this year. The Edmonton Jazz Society in co-operation with The Palms Cafe presents trumpeter Woody Shaw.

RATT
Oct. 11, 8-11 pm, 12 and 13, 8:30-12 pm, Mother Fletcher.

Princess Theatre, 10337 Whyte Ave.
Oct. 26, 12 midnight. The Princess continues their concert series of original rock artists. This Friday, leftwing swing goes rock and roll as Fat Chants do their stuff.

Convocation Hall, U of A
Oct. 28, 3 pm. The Edmonton Youth Orchestra, under the direction of Michael Massey, presents their first concert of the year. Their program includes work by Handel, Delius and Sebelius. Tickets are available from orchestra members, at the door or by phoning 434-9112; Adults \$2.00, Students and Seniors \$1.00.

Oct. 29, 8 pm Fordyce Pier directs the Symphonic Wind Ensemble.
Oct. 30, 8 pm Eva Stojek, Candidate of the Master Degree in Applied Music, gives a piano recital.

THEATER
Corbett Hall, 112 St. - 89 Ave.
Oct. 18-27, 8 pm. Keith Ashwell panned this play so you'll probably enjoy it: Mark Medoff's play *When You Comin' Back Red Ryder?* is good entertainment and there is some fine acting by the fourth year BFA students who make up Studio Theatre. Performances are free for students and tickets can be picked up at Room 3-146 in the Fine Arts Building.
Faculty St. Jean, 8406-91 St., 426-0829

Oct. 26-28, 8 pm *George Dandin* by Moliere. For more information call 486-0829.
Theatre 3, 10426-95 St., 426-3394

Oct. 25 - Nov. 10, 8 pm, Christopher Hampton's *The Philanthropist*. This comedy is about Phil, a young professor who wrestles with the problem of "loving" people and dealing with "persons". He takes refuge in arson and anagrams which results in deadly and hilarious solutions. Tickets are available at BASS outlets and at the door, or by phoning 426-6870.
Space Tournesol, 11845-77 St.

Oct. 27-28, 8:30 pm *Smashing the Boundaries of Dance* featuring Sara Mann and Jennifer Mascall. Tickets are \$3.50 and are available at the HUB Box Office, at The Bay and at the door.

GALLERIES
Students' Union Art Gallery
Oct. 19 - Nov. 1 *Draw*. This is a travelling drawing exhibition organized by the gallery. Five prairie artists are featured: Ihor Dmytruk, Phil Darrah, Don McVeigh, Janis Diner and Robert Achtemichuk.
Latitude 53, 10048-101 Ave., 423-3126

Oct. 11-31, *Erotica*, an exhibition of erotic art of the Prairies.

University of Alberta Art Gallery and Museum
Oct. 7 - Nov. 5. With the increase in scientific factuality, there was a corresponding decline in the artistic, decorative aspects of map-making. This exhibition charts the changes in cartography from the 14th to the 19th centuries.
Edmonton Public Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square, 423-2331

October 1 - 31, *19 Photographs of 18 People*. This an exhibition by Canadian photographer Joseph Vismeg.

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Appearing In RATT

"WILFRED N & THE GROWN MEN"

Thursday, Oct. 25, Friday, Oct. 26,
Saturday, Oct. 27

Starting at 8 PM

cover charge \$2.00