

Finding old wisdom in the "New Age"

by Bruce Gilchrist

So what is New Age music anyway? And why do people consistently identify it with yuppies practicing psychotherapy in pastel coloured rooms—oreven worse—SUN-FM?

Narada Sampler 4

Narada/MCA

I submit that New Age is a repulsive catch-all term for anything instrumental oriented, from soloists up to world-beat. Ironically, much New Age music is pre-modern in origin and has nothing to do with relaxing to synthesizers. Like the best forms of any strain of music, good New Age music emphasizes instrumental craftsmanship, intellectual appeal, and sensitivity of all form. It should also seek to elicit these quali-

ties in its listeners. It should not seek solely to be heard asleep.

Part of the biggest problem with the term "New Age" is that it can't possibly represent all the people grouped within it. There's the high art instrumentalism of the Windham Hill record label, the electronic experimentation of people like Maurice Jarre, and the schmaltz of yuppie relaxing music and ATV Interludes.

In the middlebrow level of New Age music is Narada, an independent label designed on the Windham Hill model. The type of music typically found on Narada is synthesizer oriented jazzy feel good music—mostly above the outright schmaltz found on SUN-FM, but sometimes dipping into it. A typical piece on the sampler is Hans Zimmer's "Summer" featuring a synthesized pan-pipe in front of a jazzy synth band. You get the feeling of a movie score with the

oooh's and ahh's of pan-pipe emotion, but you also get an annoying and unnecessary percussion section and a sense of detachment from the work that impersonates as 'pop impressionism'. It seems that many Narada artists feel naked without percussion, and lack the confidence to simply play their instruments.

The best work on the sampler, of which some is really good, is solo instrumentalist in nature, such as the George Winston-like work of pianist Michael Jones. He takes a simple melody and explores its resonance, while maintaining a changing rhythm, and never yielding to unnecessary percussion. Another good New Age work is the post-modern worldbeat of Michael Pluznick. He marries acoustic guitar with drum beats and the voices of African women. He also avoids the Paul

Simon tag by not attaching any lyrics to his work. His album "Rhythm Harvest" is a great purchase for anyone interesting in worldbeat drumming.

So far those who actually like New Age works like Ray Lynch's "Deep Breakfast", may you rest in snoring peace, but please don't identify all listeners with the same schmaltz.

There are some brilliant instrumentalists out there like George Winston, Don Ross, Michael Hedges, and Maurice Jarre. Just because the world can't think of a better label doesn't mean it's all the same. My advice is to avoid the synthesizer (except Jarre) and head straight for Windham Hill. But then again maybe I am a high-brow snob.

Squirrel chatter

After reading the review on Squirrel in the March 25th Gazette, the last place I figured I would end up on Saturday night was the Double Deuce. As it happens, I did stumble in for a while and I am disappointed that I did not go to the Deuce earlier in the evening, for then I would have been able to see more of the power-

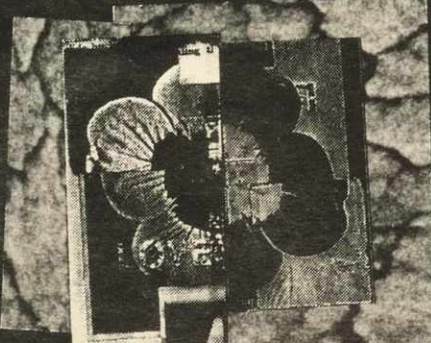
ful, energetic band that took to the stage under the name of Squirrel. I can only assume that the 'demo-quality-Sonic Youth-potential band—with horrendous vocals' had been replaced at the last moment with a crew of seasoned rockers, who knew exactly how to string a crowd along into a frenzy.

The review by 'Roland Stone' just didn't fit with the band that played Saturday night. In fact, I don't recall reading such a negative review of a band since someone panned all the bands in the CKDU compilation *Hear & Now*, including predicting no future for Sloan. I don't want to insist that all reviews should be positive, for that defeats the purpose of doing reviews, but I would think that local and young bands deserve a bit more of a break. After all, this is the stage in their careers when exposure is the most important—the time when their sound might be, and probably is, still raw and unique.


For myself personally, it is seeing a band at this stage in its career that is the most enjoyable. You might have to sacrifice some of that smooth polish that more accomplished, big-name 'professional' bands have, but in exchange there is a sense of intimacy with the band playing in smaller surroundings, an energy and vitality associated with a band that hasn't yet grown weary of touring the bars, that is actually playing to the crowd instead of the box-office. At least that's what I saw when Squirrel played the Deuce...funny thing though, I didn't see Roland Stone there.

Rocky Rhodes

IT'S BETTER TO ROCK



STONE
the new recording from
CRASH VEGAS
out now

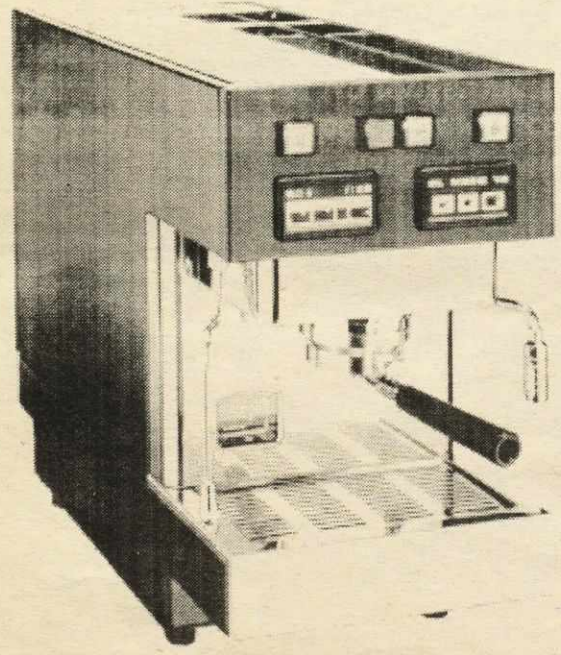
 PolyGram

MT Video
1098 Queen Street Phone: 422-4313

In appreciation of all your support please drop in and redeem these coupons. We're open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! Reservations accepted and membership free.

Monday to Thursday	Every day
Rent a New Release Get a Regular Movie Rental FREE	Rent Any Three Movies Get a bag of popcorn FREE

Offer good until April 30, 1993. Cannot be combined with other specials or offers.



The Graduate House has not only changed its blend of coffee, it has done away with the low-tech conventional coffee brewer. We now use the most up-to-date electronic and thermal technology in coffee brewing equipment. No longer must you drink coffee that has been sitting on burners in open pots, our coffee now stays fresh and hot in a unique thermal server.

Now Available on Campus
ESPRESSO, CAPPUCINO, CAFE AU LAIT

Coming Soon:
Torani Natural Flavoured Italian Fruit Sodas, Cream Sodas & Lattes

6154 University Avenue beside the SUB