

Shame, Symi, Shame, Symi, Shame, Symi, Symi, Shame

by Howard Kaman

Shame
Symi
Risque Disque

Symi is the work of Scottish native Norman Rodgers, best known for his brief stint in the Waterboys. Now living in Can-

ada, he is another in the line of successful acts "discovered" by John Caton's Artist Consulting

gers drenches almost every song in a sea of drum machines and keyboards.

In addition to all this, one keyboard, programmed to sound somewhat like a bagpipe, seems to be in almost every song. Using it as a token representation of his native culture, Rodgers not only discredits his home, but also perpetuates a stereotype.

Luckily, some of Rodgers ex-

periments do work. The Cult-like "Strangers On A Train," and the spare "This Could Be Heaven . . ." are both winners.

But, on the whole, the record is a muddle. In his attempt to cover up the stylistic confusion of *Symi*, but permeating everything with a drum-machine beat, Rodgers has created what is ultimately bland.

That is truly a shame.

Catch Puta's Fever

by "Switch"

Mano Negra
Putas Fever
Virgin Records

It's French! It's English! It's Salsa! It's Spanish! It's Rock! It's Dance music! It's everything you need for a house party (a.k.a. A party that is in a house) . . . What is it you ask? Mano Negra's album *Putas Fever*.

If the cover depicting two women dressed like table dancers doesn't do it for you, then note that the song titles are in four different languages. If you're still left thinking "pretentious," please do me a favour and listen to the record this glorious package contains. If you're still not satisfied, probably nothing can help you musically.

Putas Fever is an unusual album. It tends to be eclectic without losing the cohesive nature of a good album. Even the lyrics (at least the English ones, since my French, Spanish and Arabic aren't up to par) hit the target. Mano Negra doesn't have just one message, they give insight into different avenues of political and social thought. If there is such a thing as an international band, Mano Negra is it.

Actually, I was really surprised that such an ambitious album could hold itself together and be as pleasant to listen to as to drive to. The music is upbeat and alternative, showing signs of the modern trend towards house and dance music but not using that as offensively as most bands do. The influence is there, but Mano Negra doesn't shove it down your throat; rather, it is integrated into "their sound," as is Middle Eastern and Spanish music. The best thing about *Putas Fever* is that it satisfies you but still leaves things open for Negra's next album.

Literally, my favourite song (in English that is . . .) is "Madhouse." They push the rhyming a bit far, but the images are clear and forceful. Musically I like what they do with "Sidih'bib" and the Middle Eastern influence (wonder if they learned Arabic phonetically).

Basically, *Putas Fever* is a fun album, perfect for those crazed summer/going back to school adventures that lead us deep into the darkness of the city and trap us until dawn . . . If you hadn't heard of Mano Negra, I advise you to keep up with the alternative music scene, because if you miss this one you're really losing out on something.



Team. Following the likes of Blue Rodeo and Basic English, Shame is being heavily promoted by WEA Music, which distributes Caton's Risque Disque label.

Like the music of Caton's biggest success, Blue Rodeo, Shame's style is a hybrid. Just as the former has combined country and psychedelic rock, Rodgers has merged mindless British pop with complex lyrical ideas.

On "This House," he sings about the world as a "house full of broken glass/With jagged views on every side/Built upon the principle/Of division and divide." While ideas such as this make *Symi* an interesting album, Rod-



by Andrea Lobel

I can barely recall the day on which I first became enmeshed in the holy man's karmic web.

I had oftentimes passed his dust-laden self-help guide, *Verily, the Telephone Pole Speaketh* at Abbey Books. One evening, feeling light of both spirit and mind, I finally capitulated to the allure of the title, and bought the tome.

Of all its marvels, which included advice to wicked children, manifold incantations, and countless aphorisms, the most captivating by far was the ten-page autobiographical photo insert located between pages 54 and 55. Here, I learned the essentials pertaining to the author's life, and soon found myself chanting the melodies of his childhood.

Barely five feet tall, he sports a monk's robe and a fake black Gucci beard and mustachio. His ice-blue eyes glitter when he is pleased, and fix upon his navel at all other times. Our vagabond protagonist views the world through the eyes of one who has been raised on a steady diet of both Dr. Seuss and Rasputin; of one who is, thanks to the hyperdiligence of his neo-elvin, bell-donning parents, convinced that there is deep meaning to be found in the mundane objects and events that surround him. Flowers and rocks exist for the sake of meditation; corporate offices for the sake of demolition, and rice, for the sake. Where countless others see electric pink store awnings, he and he alone is privy to visions of bikini-clad bowing prophets. Let's face it — the man's deep.

Named Bertrand Russell Velikovsky Smith-Finkelstein at birth, the future spiritualist made it totally clear, early in life, that he was to be called B. "It justifies my existence," said the four year-old would-be guru, "and that of others."

B is a roving monk by trade. No cloisters for him, as he suffers from both claustrophobia and the occasional acute anxiety attack, the latter of which is usually triggered by his earthier brother's whistled renditions of "How could you believe me when I told you that I loved you when you know I've been a liar all my life," and "Why don't we do it in the road," both tunes having played integral roles in B's early psychic development.

So it was that late one dreary, overcast Saturday afternoon, I chanced — if this is the correct term — to encounter B standing to one side of the five-star ticket booth located directly in front of the Eaton Centre. Unsurprisingly, his demeanour was one of aloof observance; seemingly both transfixed and transformed by the nearby wicket transactions, the neighbourhood monk was, at the moment I first sighted him, utterly immobile.

My initial impulse was to shy away. I was all at once seized by an irrepresible urge to dash Northward, toward the more predictable, scenic aisles of the World's biggest bookstore, where, I knew, the familiar titles *No kibbles for Ubu* and *Madama Butterfly: Insect or Femme Fatale* lay in wait.

Pausing in uffish thought, however, I confronted my angst, summoned near-Ulysean courage, and made ready . . . to meet the monk.

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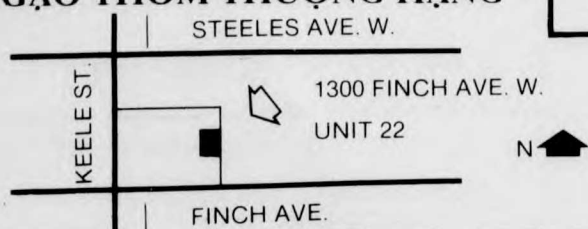
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