

# Record Reviews

**Aaron Davis**  
*Neon Blue*  
Duke Street

by Scott Gordon

**A**aron Davis comes from the Toronto jazz band Manteca. To this album he brings not only his musicianship and expertise from his experience with this band, but also experience from outside of the North American jazz scene's usual haunts. This is not because Davis is all that big of a name that he cannot draw the big-name sessionmen, but when a musician of the calibre of keyboardist Davis writes such great music and knows such great but little-known musicians, who needs big names?

All seven songs on the album are finely crafted and exquisitely executed. This is not squeak and squawk jazz; it has melody, rhythm and lyrics and a very nice way of taking the listener into the music rather than assaulting the ears and going through the head, leaving the listener shell-shocked and unsure whether to love the music or pass it off as "too-cerebral-so-it-must-be-good."

Basi Mahlasela's vocals on "Mandela" and "Biko" are wonderfully smooth, as are

**Various Artists**  
*Driven Element* cassette  
Driven Element Productions

by Rodney Gitzel

**D**riven Element is a limited-edition cassette put together by CJSR DJs Marcel Dion and Gene Kosowan. The former hosts "Departures", a show of electronic and experimental music, so you might expect this tape to consist of ninety minutes of electronic and experimental music.

However, don't expect any Tangerine Dream or Jean Piche from this compilation, for **THEY** aren't from Edmonton. All of the artists featured on this tape **ARE** from Edmonton, though, and as evidenced by this tape, the underground music scene in this burg isn't suffering from a lack of basement studios!

Most of the sub-genres of electronic/electroacoustic music appear on this tape:

Molly Johnson's vocals on the title cut. The production is smooth. The music is smooth. This jazz is smooth.

For the hardcore jazz freaks, *Neon Blue* may be too smooth. But for the regular jazz aficionado, or the uninitiated, Aaron Davis dishes out some great music.

new-age, found-sound, tape-manipulation, rock-minimalism-under-voiceovers, eeteese, as well as many hybrids and much that is fairly hard to describe non-aurally.

Of special note is U of A electroacoustic music prof George Arasimowicz' "Bohater", a long piece which manipulates various bowed strings, muted trumpets, and a piano into all sorts of directions. It is more of a serious or "academic" piece, descended from a musique-concrete/tape-manipulation approach (i.e. it sounds nothing remotely like Kraftwerk), and it is quite dynamic and engaging.

Also of interests is Wilfrid Kozub's "RPV", a happily little synth ditty seeded with garbage can lids and other bits of neat noise. Bruce Atchinson puts tape loops and samples of what might be the Clover Bar dump to good use in "Move It Out Now". Chris Taylor's "A Four Minute Exercise" (as in jumping jacks) seemed

silly at first. It still seems silly, but it's lots of fun nevertheless. Evan C. Jones contributes a great fuzz-guitarbased piece called "Retrospection", and the excerpt from Scott Alloy's "Gimly Grog" intrigues me to no end. There doesn't seem to be a bad piece on the entire tape, even considering that Killers Lose In The Parking Lot disappoint slightly but not sonically, considering their name.

Anyways, packaging-wise, this cassette is a wonderful little production. Not only is it limited to one-hundred numbered copies, but each copy features a unique bit of cardboard artwork (by Bill Shiell), and every copy I've seen looks different. Mine looks fairly simple, but there are some more complicated designs to be found. Plus, even the tape itself is colourful! It's too bad that it's only the little record labels who tend to indulge in this sort of cottage industriousness.



**Shuffle Demons**  
*Bop Rap*  
Stony Plain

by Mike Spindloe

**T**he Shuffle Demons literally busked themselves up from the streets of Toronto a couple of years ago with an album entitled *Streetniks*, released on their own label. Using their reputation as a good live band and an unusually hip capitalistic sense, the Demons have now developed a line of Demon-paraphernalia unparalleled in Canadian music.

*Bop Rap*, the Shuffle Demons' recently released second album, contains an order form for an array of merchandise that would make a heavy metal promoter blush. It also contains, more importantly, ten new slices of Demon musical mayhem. These are split between humorous novelty-type tunes and the kind of modern bop jazz that made their first album a Demon classic.

Opening with the theme from "Hockey Night in Canada", the Demons take on the classified ads ("Personal Blues"), get bio-

graphical ("East Berlin Angst") and then sleazy ("12 Beer My Dear"). That's just on side one.

But as fun and cool and hip as these songs are, they remain novelty tunes, included because, well, probably because the Demons wanted to, but also because they'll sell better (and maybe even get more airplay) than their real best stuff, which is jazz in the bop tradition.

Fortunately, there are also a few tunes on *Bop Rap* which showcase this aspect of Demon culture, including the wonderfully cacophonous "Cruise Blues", as well as "I Mean You", "The Curse", and "Low Life", which is far too short.

Despite the Demons' self-prescribed status as the "only known antidote to seriousness in Canadian music," they probably would like to be known as something more than a novelty.

Paradoxically, if anyone can bring jazz to a wider audience, it's got to be the Shuffle Demons. If they offend a few purists along the way, well, who cares. Here's hoping that they can continue to succeed in meshing both aspects of Demon Culture as well as they do on *Bop Rap*.

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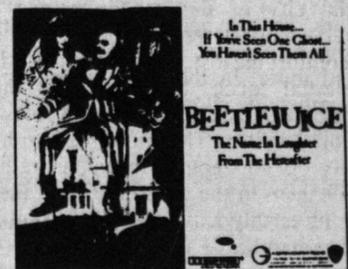
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