

Two rad reviews

Terrifying imagery... Jacob's Ladder thrills

by Gurn Blasten

If one watches a lot of films it is inevitable that some will strike a personal chord. These are the films that challenge the way we live, our belief systems, and how we face life and death.

Jacob's Ladder is one of those films. A movie that provides shocks in a psychological and ontological context. It is a film about a man literally on the edge and it uses this basic situation as a framework to examine the very nature of one's personal reality.

Played to perfection by Tim Robbins, *Jacob's Ladder* is a Vietnam vet who experiences horrifying hallucinations that make him question his own sanity and even reality itself. Nightmarishly presented, these apparitions elevate *Jacob's Ladder* into the realm of a psychological horror classic. According to director Adrian Lyne, the paintings of Francis Bacon were used as inspiration. These paintings often depicted blurred images with streaks of red through them suggesting scenes of chaotic and gruesome violence.

This chaotic atmosphere is what permeates the entire film. One does not watch this film as much as experience and participate in its harrowing journey. Eventually one finds it difficult to discern reality from the phantasmagoria. This leads to an uncompromising feeling of dread brought on by the unending onslaught of terrifying imagery.

It is the ending however, that does it cause one to question the entire reality of the film itself, but it also challenges one's own belief in life and death.

In light of this, it is interesting to compare the film with the recent *Flatliners*. While they both share similar themes, their execution of them is very different. *Flatliners* took a heavy-handed and pedestrian approach in its handling of images and ideas. *Jacob's Ladder* however is appropriately enigmatic and thought-provoking in its treatment of the same ideas. In fact, it is a rarity among the recent crop of horror films. It frightens you in the place where fear is born, the mind.

Spirit of the West comes east

by Joey Goodings

Spirit of the West kicked the butts of a packed audience at the Grawood last Friday. The place was in such a frenzy I thought everyone was going to spontaneously combust and below the SUB sky high (o.k., so I'm exaggerating, but let's just say it was "more than hopping")

Spirit of the West is a Vancouver-based band that was in town to promote their latest album "Save This House".

Some highlights of the show were "The Crawl", one of their first songs, an a capella version of "Gottingen Street" (yes, they mean that one) and, their final song "Take it From the Source" which is a song that speaks out against persecution of minorities, particularly homophobia, and which was in my opinion the most powerful part of the show.

Before the show I was able to interview the guitarist, John Mann, and the flutist/vocalist/drummer/harmonica player, Geoffrey Kelly.

Gazette: For all those people who are going to have missed tonight's show by the time they read this article, what kind of show will they have missed?

Spirit of the West: They'll have missed a show that's going to be fucking wild. We've only got two more shows left on this tour so were coming in on the home stretch now.

Gaz: What are you trying to get across in your shows? Are they simply for people to go fucking wild, or is there something more?

Spirit of the West: Certainly most of our songs carry some kind of message. And so often we present our point of view in the hope that either we give support to people of similar point of views and open the minds of people who are not of like mind to us. But primarily, we're

here to entertain; if we can't get the audience going, then the message is lost.

Gaz: With the commercial success of "Save this House" are you finding that there's a change both in

or theatre type place.... We like having the audience right up at the stage and dancing so we can see them close up. When people are sitting down and they're away from the stage it's hard to feel really



Spirit of the West plays to packed house the way you are received by your audience and in the way you communicate with your fans?

Spirit of the West: I don't think so, we've always had a really good rapport with our fans. The following we have now is more or less built up on playing live and touring and that's still going to be the base of our support. We've added to our following by having some radio play which is new to us... so there's a lot of people who only know us through that kind of exposure.

Gaz: How has your music been described and how would you describe it yourself?

Spirit of the West: We don't even try to describe ourselves. There's so many different influences in what we do, there's celtic and rock and soul. In our seven years of playing we haven't heard a description of us that we liked and we haven't thought of one ourselves. We've been called techno-folk, folk-punk, celtic rock, there's just no point in trying to define our sound.

Gaz: Do you have anything you would like to say to students in

connected to the crowd. The energy exchange isn't nearly as intimate. But the time may be coming for us when we have to try and bridge that gap.

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Gaz: Do you have anything you would like to say to students in

Spirit of the West: Yeah, quit writing "kill fags" on the bathroom walls. I always find that so distressing. When you come to a university it's supposed to be a place where people are being educated, but generally you find that there are more morons per capita in universities than any other institution in Canada. It almost makes budget cuts look like a great idea.

It's really depressing to see all kinds of homophobic shit written all over the walls. (other guy) On the other hand it's good to see much more of a movement of minority groups getting organized and standing up for themselves, like a lot of universities have their own gay & lesbian newspapers. It's good to see, it's going to take that to make people turn around and realize that there's a lot of strength and solidarity among the minority groups. It's really necessary.

Before the band ended with a song "Take it from the Source" John Mann made an appeal to students to speak out against anything sexist, racist, or homophobic, and not to just let these things pass quietly. I've decided to reprint the last verse of this song to give you an idea of what the band is all about.

I guess I just don't measure up
Strayed from the straight and narrow road
So you lock me up, throw away the key
Cause I don't live by your dress code
That's o.k., I've heard it before
You can open the wound, I feel no pain
I don't need an armour suit
You're the one with the ball and chain

Well put. Watch out for the next time *Spirit of the West* makes it to the Maritimes.

by Bil

Laquan
Notes of a Native Son

OK so ask me, what is so special about another rapping artist? Well, I'll tell you... Laquan isn't just the proverbial punk from the street noise-maker, he's a well-reared young man with a few good things to say and an interesting style.

Laquan is sixteen years of age and shoves the frustration of nineties youth right in your face. Not by screaming at you, but by making you listen to what he has to say.

The title track "Notes of a Native Son" draws you in with thumpin' pumpin' well-rounded and full, full, full sound. Not just sampling and scratching but music, true song. It's good, yes. So now what does this boy have to say?

Black power is the main theme. His message is generally directed towards the

black population with tunes like the already well known "Now's the B turn". "Swing Blue Sweat Black" combines Robert Johnson's Mississippi delta blues with killer jazz horns, and gospel girls. Laquan's rap gets the history of black music, and moreover, black history across.

Now don't get me wrong, songs like "Tear Your Soul Out" begin with great vocal beauty, but fall short with lyrics like: "I'll tear a hold in your chest to wipe the sweat and when I'm done use your lungs for extra breath." This may not be what you, and certainly isn't what I want to hear.

Overall, these are good tunes but be warned dear reader, you may wish to (as I have already done) press record/mute when you come to "Puddin' Pie".

The Unkind Truth About Rome Jellyfishbabies

Big city songs from hometown boys. As Scott Kenall of the Jellyfishbabies wrote, "The songs on this

album were not conceived as a complete work but as a collection of songs which represent Jellyfishbabies' musical directions and changes since the release of the first album." I think you will agree with me when I say that their first album, while being truly raw and powerful, didn't quite cut it.

This venture is, however, a step in the right direction. Perhaps that is an understatement...It's a leap in the right direction. If everyone spent this much time writing and working we would hear more music and less noise.

Personally, I'm a major fan of their ballad type tunes. But that is not to belittle those hard hitting "coming at your middle ear" tunes like "Wild Cows".

It is compositions like "63 Misery Avenue" which give that hopeless sweet, melodious, bring tears to your eyes, state of the world feeling can make you fall head over heels...gee guys, I'm in love.

MUSIC

by Andrew Duke

Technotronic
Trip On This (The Remixes)
Capitol

Six months ago Technotronic, a.k.a. Belgian artist Jo Bogaert, had underground dancefloors buzzing about the "Pump Up The Jam" instrumental. A catchy rap was later added by rapper Ya Kid K (Manuella Kamosi) and now Technotronic is a Top 40 staple. With the demise of vinyl, music companies have begun releasing dance mix collections on compact disc, most of which have turned out to be absolute garbage.

The prolific and talented mixmaster Shep Pettibone provides two medleys for this disc; one a lengthy collage of the new versions of the better tracks, the other a short mix of some of the original CD tracks. Dave Morales strips away the annoying samples—from the "Spin That Wheel" (credited to the band Hi-Tek 3, yet actually Technotronic with some outside help) into a techno churmer.

MC Eric (Eric Martin), the other featured rapper, has radically changed his boasts for the short Dust Bros. mix of "This Beat Is Technotronic". Junior Vasquez reworks the entire instrumentation for "Take It Slow" and loses the energy of the song in the process, while Keith Cohen horribly dates "Get Up! (Before The Night Is Over)" by mixing it with the base tracks of the Royal House "Can You Party" anthem of two years ago. "Raw" is updated with heavy new beats, but a pathetic rap.

In the end it is the inspired work of Todd Terry and New Order/Electronic's Bernard Sumner that save this project. "Pump Up The Jam" becomes "And The Jam Is Pumpin'" through the work of the former, who lays just a bit of the original lyrics over a minimal, atmospheric swingbeat. The Manchester Hacienda mix of "Rockin' Over The Beat", with Sumner throwing down better vocal tracks and new breakbeat samples, is the hidden highlight.

Guru Josh
Infinity
BMG
Guru Josh (Paul Weston) has

been playing live at British warehouse raves for the last eighteen months, captivating crowds with his absurd wit and accompanied only by a saxophone player and banks of keyboards.

"Infinity (1990's The Time For The Guru)", the title track and first single from this disc, is a techno house instrumental offset by a warm sax line. "Who's Law (Is It Anyway?)" the only track with what one could refer to as a vocal line, is a response to the crackdown on the all-night dance parties; this second single is similar with more depth, but is developed with more depth.

It is good to hear Guru Josh, along with Adamski, A Guy Called Gerald, 808 State and others, bringing these new rhythms into the mainstream. That this project seems to have been rushed, and out-tends to rant incessantly, and out-of-place, lazy, live cover versions of "Popcorn" and "Louie Louie" are included, can be overlooked. Though some of his material—reminiscent at times of Jean-Michel Jarre—is uninspired, most tracks are excellent. Guru Josh will be developing his talent for crafting heavy bass-driven music in the future.

CREATIVE WHITE SPACE

Miller's Crossing - Machine gun mania

by Kevin Spencer

Through their first two movies, *Blood Simple* and *Raising Arizona*, the Coen Brothers, Joel and Ethan, showed they had perverse sensibilities and a bent, darkly humorous view of the world. In their latest film, *Miller's Crossing*, once again they parade their own unique outlook and morals on the screen.

Miller's Crossing, which was written, produced and directed by the Brothers Coen, follows the intense dealings and betrayals when a gang war erupts in 1929 New Orleans. Gabriel Byrne plays Tommy the Irish mobster caught in the middle of a power struggle between Leo, played by Albert Finney, and Casper, played by John Turturro. The audience watches as Tommy, by way of an impressive and exhaustive series of lies and deceptions, manipulates and affects the people and events in the war. Unlike many movies, the ending is both somewhat unexpected and strangely satisfying.

Unlike recent treatments of the gangster scene, *Miller's Crossing* is not abrasive and aggressive in its depiction of the underworld. While this movie is pow-

erful, it is not the "grab you by the lapels and rough you up" type of powerful, the motive elements of this film are more subtle and subsumed, as is consistent of Coen brothers collaborations.

Gabriel Byrne (Gothic) plays his role of the shifty and amoral gangster Tommy extremely well and it is often very hard to discern his true motives and loyalties. He gives a weird depth to the character and you aren't sure whether you like him or not. He has an unmistakable charisma, but that is often overshadowed by his sleazy arrangements and double crosses. Sometimes you question whether he values anything.

Albert Finney does a good understated job of Leo, the mob boss under seige. There is one violent and memorable scene where Leo proves he is still a master with a "Tommy Gun". John Turturro is sufficiently repulsive and greasy in his portrayal of Casper, the renegade mobster.

All the characters, both lead and supporting, are given a vibrancy and unique slant that is a testament to the insightful and intelligent script. It is the script as well as the conscientious and sometimes conspicuous direction that gives this film its darkly effective mood.