

## WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?

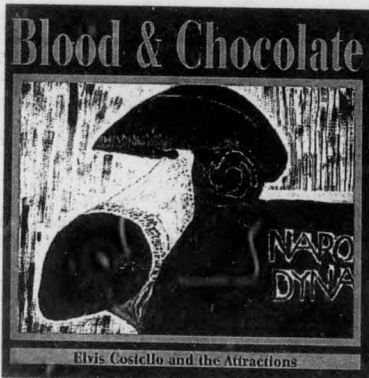
This week I thought I would concentrate on artists who have been away for a while, but have finally come back with a new album. Or an old album that has been reissued for some reason. But more of that later, as I really should start things off with some new music.



And where better to start than with Mike Scott who has been gone for a long, long time. Let's face it, the last Waterboys album wasn't all that good - it left me pining for the days of *Fisberman's Blues* again. In the last couple of years, Mike has become a bit of a recluse living on a commune in the north of Scotland. But last year he started to play a few concerts, sing a few new songs and from what I heard from some folks back home, he was sounding better than ever. The new album is called *Bring 'Em All In*, and it is really quite good. He plays all the instruments on there, and most are of the acoustic variety. Or in other words, things are getting more folksy again - hurrah! The lyrics seem to deal primarily with spirituality, but Scotland is mentioned again and again in the fondest way. I like that too. Nationalism can be such a

positive thing in the right hands. And the acoustic sound lends an air of integrity to the proceedings in a way that only it can. *Bring 'Em All In* is just as good as any of the Waterboys' albums, and it really is a welcome return.

Sigh. The last of the Elvis Costello albums have been reissued, and I am more than a little sad. But fortunately things are ending on a very high note, namely the very fine *Blood And Chocolate*. It is probably my favourite Costello album, and with the addition of six bonus tracks I like it even better. It has songs by Elvis at his most venomous ('Tokyo Storm Warning'), his



most eloquent ('Crimes Of Paris') and his most tender ('I Want You'). That last song is quite simply one of the most moving ever committed to tape, and will probably have you in tears the first time you hear it. Maybe even the second time too. This is probably the most typical of the later Elvis albums as there are no diversions into other areas. Just honest-to-goodness Attractions. The most incredible thing about this album is that every song is perfect - no filler. And how often does that happen? Exactly. The

only worrying aspect of this album is the feeling that Elvis Costello will never produce anything this good every again. But if you own *Blood And Chocolate*, *King Of America* and *My Aim Is True* then you won't worry quite so much.

If you do feel the urge to start working your way through another set of reissues, one artist worth considering is Frank Zappa. During his career, he released almost 60 albums - rather daunting to someone not familiar with his work. Fortunately Rykodisc have put together the very ironically titled *Strictly Commercial*, which features nineteen tracks from sixteen albums. Call it a greatest hits package of sorts. Zappa toyed with many styles of music during his long and varied career, and while not all of them are represented here, most of them do turn up. Personally, I find some of the work dated, but when he let his sense of humour shine through (on 'Valley Girl' or 'Don't Eat The Yellow Snow'),



he was a unique performer. And a pretty mean guitar player too - one of the finest. Ever.

I try my best not to be superficial, but I just can't get past the fact that Lenny Kravitz has an sticky-out belly button. The CD booklet for *Circus* is full of pictures of him as members of a circus doing all kinds of things. And you can clearly see his belly button in all its glory. Yuk. But enough of that - what about the music? Well, if you remember 'Are You Gonna Go My Way', and how it depended on that one riff being repeated again and again, then you know exactly what to expect. Lots of repetitive guitars. He's still on his big nostalgia kick, and that is getting a bit tiresome too. This isn't his finest work by a long way; it's been downhill all the way since he was dumped by Lisa Bonet...

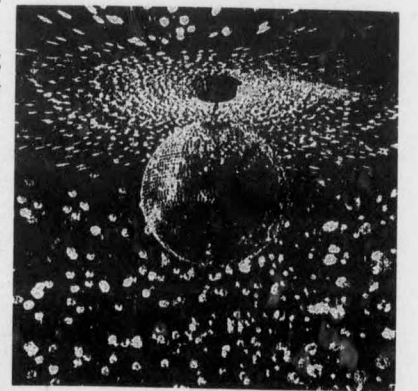


ask for it

Hole's new release, *Ask For It*, almost doesn't deserve a mention as there isn't much new material on it. You get three Hole songs recorded as a Peel Session back in 1991, and four cover versions. The version of 'Violet' is rougher than the original, and all the better for it while rough doesn't even begin to describe their take on 'Pale Blue Eyes'. The reason that it does get a mention is for the incredibly disturbing cover photo of wrists belonging to someone who has attempted suicide. It is very

graphic, and quite horrible to look at, and also a wonderful way to get publicity too. So let's just leave it at that.

Neil Young and Pearl Jam - a marriage made in Heaven? In Hell? Hmm - tough call. I like Neil Young an awful lot, and



I also dislike Pearl Jam an awful lot. So I was very intrigued by Neil's new album *Mirror Ball*, if only to see what could come out of this collaboration. And it sounds just like a Neil Young album - not his best album, but a good album nonetheless. The level of collaboration is actually quite small with Young writing all the songs (with a small credit to Eddie Vedder), and Pearl Jam simply take the place of Crazy Horse. That's it. When it is good, it is very good but there are some songs that just make me cringe. Like the awful first single 'Downtown', for instance. Fortunately moments like 'Throw Your Hatred Down' and 'Act Of Love' save the day. On the scale of nineties Neil Young albums, it falls way below *Harvest Moon* or *Sleeps With Angels*, but not too far behind *Ragged Glory*.

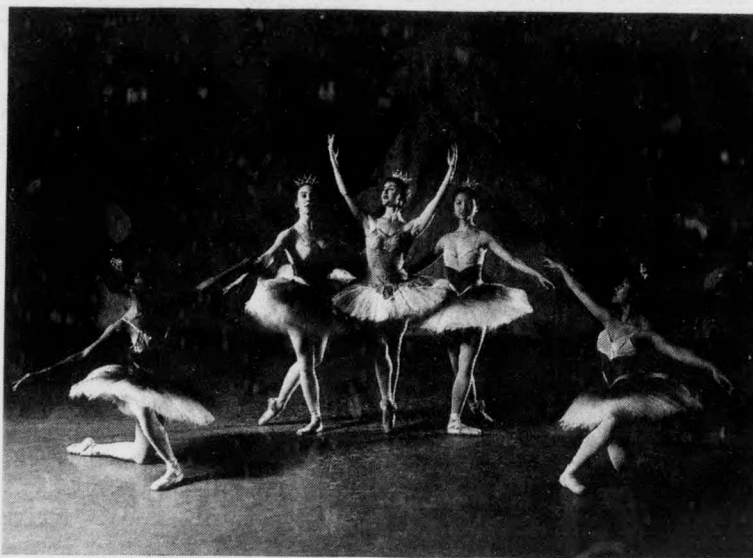
## Onstage offers Ballet Jorgen

by EKY  
Brunswickan Entertainment

I went to my first ballet at the Playhouse a week ago on Wednesday night. The Nutcracker no less. This was a new version of the story, first performed on November 1 of this year and based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Der Nussknacker und der Mausekonig". Ballet Jorgen were fabulous, but I really must say - I kept expecting someone to talk. Yeah, yeah I know, the whole dancers-as-speaking-with-their-bodies thing, but just imagine how difficult it would be to tell a story with your mouth closed. Music, however, is a form of expression, and dance - an equally potent tool - combined become a language of bodies and looks.

Perhaps it was my seating - front row right - that enabled me to be so empathetic; I was close enough to hear the dancers pant. I have a new respect for these 'foot-bound', 'breathing controlled', beautiful and sweating artists. I was close enough to hear their toes touching the stage and feel behind their perpetually pleasant faces and still chests - the heart-pounding, the breath-guarded.

The ballet itself was enchanting. Timely and opulent, the Christmas scenes and the adventure in the world



of snow put a glow in my heart - that only December nostalgia just-before-the-first-snow can. Also I had forgotten the story of the Nutcracker, but as soon as we got to the part where the little girl's doll-maker-uncle presents her with the cherished toy I remembered my own. As a matter of fact, the ballerinas/ballet dancers - the ballet - the whole thing spurred memories of a spinning ballerina doll that I had received for Christmas not so long ago. I never expected to get so sentimental. Who knew?

Although I didn't fully understand the purpose of the multicultural bit in the Land of Sweets, I was quite

taken with it. The Arabian, Russian, Spanish, and Oriental dances were superb. The rather petite ballerina donning Russian garb was quite dynamic - her mid-air flip was memorable, and I especially enjoyed the Arabian flavored, seductively slithering trio. They each added an exotic air to the otherwise, quite thematically Euro-aristocratic Acts.

All in all, I was really charmed - in spite of myself - by the world of Sugarplum Fairies, flowers, snowflakes, Snow Queens, cavaliers and dolls. It was a happily made escape from the everyday.

## PLEURAL

"A road trip through art history & broken glass."

by Eric Hill  
for Brunswickan Entertainment

So what does it all mean? A question often contemplated, discussed, argued, philosophised upon, dramatized in award-winning cable television programs but never answered to universal satisfaction. Until now, you ask? No, probably not ever... but that's no reason to stop asking.

PLEURAL asks the question in the form of three connected monologues. Three people on the road. Alone with their questions & worries. As well as being flesh & blood people, these three also represent various schools of art often at odds: abstraction vs. representation... surrealism vs. realism... formalism vs. deconstruction... dadaism vs. well... art itself I suppose. The interplay centers upon the difficult gap between singular vision and the wish for universal expression of... what it all means.

We live in a time where language issues are always either on or not far from the surface. Putting aside the political and traditional values (as

much as that is possible) it may be seen that people using the same system of communication, whether it be English, French or the visual language of painting, can't always make communication work either.

If you don't want to hurt your head thinking about all this, rest assured that PLEURAL also occurs on the level of good, clean, perverse entertainment. You can let the deep meanings seep into your subconscious WHILE-U-ENJOY.

PLEURAL will be a combined presentation of dramatic reading, improvisational music and assorted visual devices. It is scheduled for Tuesday, November 14th, 8 p.m. at Gallery Connexion on Queen St., located behind the Justice Building. It features a text by Eric Hill, performed by Paula Dawson, Darryl Whetter & Eric Hill, as well as atmospheric music by Mark Carmody & Karl Gans. Admission is in the form of a donation to the artist-run Gallery. Questions may or may not be answered by calling 459-8763 or 458-8832 and asking for Eric. Thanksamillion & seeyathere.