

# Skeleton Crew's Frith and Cora awe inspiring

by RE-PRESS Magazine

Although the name of Fred Frith is relatively obscure, he has long been a formidable force in avant-garde music. Exposed as a teenager to the concepts of John Cage, he has applied the theory of making music from sound (as opposed to traditional instruments) and sound into music. For ten years he was a member of British avant-garde group Henry Cow and he has worked with the Residents and Brian Eno. More recently, he's worked with friend and musician Tom Cora in an outfit entitled Skeleton Crew. Both are renowned musicians in classical, jazz and rock circles.

Obviously, musicians of such high calibre are rarely seen in Halifax, so it was with an air of celebration and excitement that we awaited the concert last Friday night of Fred Frith and Tom Cora. We were not disappointed (even though the concert was 45 mins late because Air Canada couldn't find their baggage and instruments when the plane landed in Halifax).

The mood for the concert was set with the first piece, which began with a tape of Jerry Falwell speech proclaiming that rock music was akin to blasphemy. From there on, Frith and Cora wove rhythms and melodies into a tapestry of exotic sound. With taped sounds supplying a basis for about half of the pieces, Frith switched instruments effortlessly, from a Fender 6-string bass to his prepared "bodyless guitar" to violin, all the while adding rhythm by working drum pedals with his feet. Cora, meanwhile,

concentrated mainly on his cello, which he played with bow, an elastic band and a toy car. Cora also supplied the main "rhythm section" with two pedal drums, a hi-hat and pedal operated blocks. The music flowed from feedback improvisations to traditionally flavoured cello and violin duets, their music evoking awe and anticipation of just what type of sound they would next produce.

After the concert, we had a chance to speak with Frith and Cora. Following are some excerpts from that RE-PRESS interview:

RE-PRESS: What about the British music press?

FRITH: The weekly music press is very powerful and well within the pockets of the record industry, which is in desperate shape at the moment. Actually it's in the process of trying to survive by coming up with something new all the time. That's all it's ever done, but it used to take much longer. Now it happens in a very rapid cycle, so it's in the interest of the industry to produce a new market for a new identity all the time. People are actually taken in by it. I'm not saying that it's a conspiracy on the part of the record industry to engineer people's tastes. All they do is, when they see something happening which is very creative, they immediately grab it and try to make up versions of it, to make a stable market. It never quite worked, so it's turning over very rapidly.

RE-PRESS: What do you think of the music that's on the radio these days?

FRITH: I never listen to the radio. (Points to the speaker overhead which is pumping out CKDU at very loud volume). This is fascism. It has nothing to do with the music they're playing, it has to do with it's being forced on us whether we like it or not. Who decided that? I find it really disgusting.

On Tom's Bass Playing:

FRITH: Tom hadn't played bass before Skeleton Crew. He's actually

incapable of playing bass without playing drums at the same time.

CORA: My feet are somehow married to bass playing at this point. I'm not totally uncomfortable with the idea; I could live with it for some time, but I wonder about this problem. Will there be a surgical solution, or will there be a natural musical progression?

RE-PRESS: Skeleton Crew does not have an album out yet - is there

one planned for the future?

CORA: In the beginning we wanted to see what becomes of this...

FRITH: One of the things about being a young band is that it's actually a great feeling to know you're going to make a record eventually, but you don't have to do it immediately. We're not in any hurry.

## Comedy Asylum con't

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as a waiter. Lew hired me as a waiter because I had a university degree and he loves hiring university graduates as waiters. Once I found out that he was going to hire me I felt really guilty and confessed — I'm an actor! So when he found that out he asked me if I'd be interested in doing the dinner theatre.

Maven: How did the rest of you get involved?

Jenny: Marshall got in touch with a guy named Michael McHugh who knew a whole lot of people who were trying to be involved in various drama groups in Fredericton and I was one of them. Michael's wife had been involved in drama at St. Thomas University and she knew a lot of people here that she'd been in plays with. Marshall also knew some people and between them they got together. There were 11 in the first

show.

Maven: What show was that?

Jenny: *The Good Doctor* by Neil Simon.

Karen: So it started out on a trial basis and went really well. Lew enjoyed it and wanted to do it again.

Jenny: At the beginning Michael McHugh was producer and Marshall was artistic director. Lew was general manager in terms of organizing the whole thing and I was acting in the first show. In the second show I got involved in doing more and starting doing company managing. Lis started doing stage managing. Michael was still producing.

We split up the directing for that show but I guess Marshall coordinated it overall. In the summer it was just Marshall, me, Liz, and Sean. The second show, called *Hallelujah*, went to Moncton and Edmundston. That was our first

trip out on the road and it worked well enough that we knew we could do it again.

The 3rd show played in the summer, 3 nights a week, basically for tourists all summer and was billed as "Lobster and Laughter." It went over really well and, if it wasn't always packed, we always had fun.

The evening begins with appetizers at 6:55 pm and culminates with curtain call at 10:30 pm. The cast mingle freely with the guests before and after the show (they double as entertaining waiters and waitresses).

I could not recommend a show more highly. For an evening out the price is really quite good. Treat yourself as an end-of-term present and take a special friend.

*The Comedy Asylum* will be in Kentville April 2, 4, & 5 and Halifax April 6, 7, & 8. Phone the Wandlyn for information and reservations.

## CLASS OF '83



## GRADUATION WEEK

TUES. MAY 10

*Baccalaureate Service 6:30 p.m.*  
*King's Chapel*

*Presidents Reception 8:00 p.m.*  
*Presidents Residence*

WED. MAY 11

*Tree Planting Ceremony 3:00 p.m.*  
*A&A*

*Bon Voyage Bar-B-Q 3:30 p.m.*  
*Behind the SUB*  
*All you can eat / \$2.50*

*Hawaiian Boat Cruise 6:00 p.m.*  
*Historic Properties / \$5.00*

*Dal Downtown 8:00 p.m.*  
*Watch for the Agenda*

THURS. MAY 12

*High Society Night*  
*Check with your society for events.*

*Grad Night at the Grawood 9:00 p.m.*  
*Live Entertainment / Free admin.*  
*Live Entertainment / Free adm.iss.*

FRI. MAY 13

*Graduation Ball 10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.*  
*- Music by John Alphonse*  
*- Full course dinner served at 2:00 a.m.*  
*- Complimentary Graduation Wine Glasses*

TICKETS

*Sales start Wed. April 6 in the SUB Lobby*  
*11:30 to 1:30 weekdays.*