

arts

Cano: How can they be so good?

Concert review by Hollis Brown and Gordon Turtle

Make no mistake; Cano is so far ahead of any other Canadian band that it's scary. They proved this indisputably in front of two huge and warmly enthusiastic audiences on Tuesday night in SUB Theatre during a pair of magnificent concerts.

Performing material from their second and third albums, this Franco-Ontarian seven-piece group dazzled its audience with peerless vocals, exciting instrumentation and even a bit of novel guerilla theater. Each member of Cano operates as a part of the larger group making it difficult to single out any one performer as a star. However, all of the group's musicians were given at least one opportunity to display his or her talents in a lead or solo section, and each one was superb.

Guitarist Dave Burt and violinist Wasyl Kohut are the obvious musical leaders of the band, as individually they astonish and in tandem they overwhelm. During songs such as "Mon Pays" and "Spirit of the North" the guitar and violin interweave to produce a lush, full sound that is counterpointed perfectly by John Doerr's very lyrical bass and Michel Dasti's solid but unobtrusive piano. Keyboard player Michel Kendall stands out both as a piano instrumentalist and as a backing organ rhythmist.

The musical harmony of Cano is well-suited for the band's vocalists Rachel Paiement and Marcel Aymar, who plays acoustic guitar. Paiement has a clear strong voice that literally filled the theatre, and her emotive manipulation is made even more intense by the evocative resiliency of her singing. Whether in French or English, when Rachel Paiement sings a ballad or a rousing tune, you listen with both ears.

Paiement's decidedly unclouded vocals are matched with the gruff and smoky voice of Marcel Aymar, who is also the band's erstwhile dramatist. "Soleil Mon Chef" and "Rumrun, er's Runaway", two songs in which Aymar is featured, are opened by a form of dramatic monologue; an unexpected twist which was entertaining, though in the latter song a trifle too long. Aymar seems to be the dark horse figure in Cano; he remains almost unnoticed during the songs he does not sing, but emerges in an unmistakably powerful display of poetic and musical talent for the material he controls.

From the moment that Cano walked on stage, their appreciative audience applauded them almost wildly, a reaction that clearly affected the group. I've seen a lot of concerts in Edmonton where the audiences were unable to discriminate between good and bad, cheering on the worst performers to second and third encores. But Cano's audience (for the early show, at least) was without a doubt the warmest and most polite crowd I have ever seen. Cano appeared thrilled by the reception they received and were able to perform in such a manner that one felt as if there were only about fifty people in the audience. Rachel Paiement, who in a Friday concert in Vancouver appeared somewhat uneasy and distant, could not suppress smiles of delight throughout Tuesday's early show, and the rest of the band seemed to warm towards the audience as well.



Rachel Paiement.



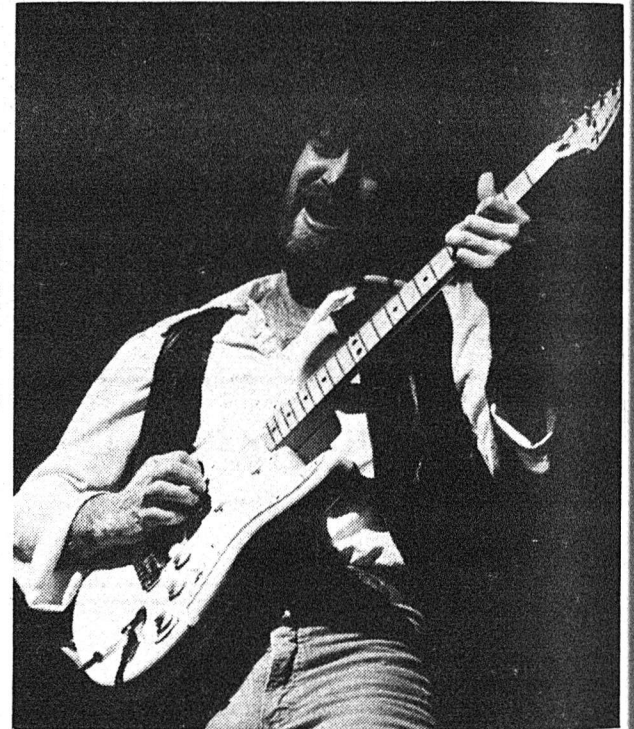
Members of Cano: drummer Michel Dasti, violinist Wasyl Kohut, vocalist Rachel Paiement, bassist John Doerr, and guitarist David Burt.

Photos by Rick Lawrence

Cano performed with such energy and sincerity that it was hard not to be swept into their music. During instrumental pieces and sections, Rachel Paiement danced along almost frivolously with her fellow musicians, and, when a particular instrument was highlighted, the other members would practically huddle around the featured performer as if they were hearing his amazing solo for the first time. An observer can't help but be impressed and even touched by the musical expression of the close ties amongst the members of Cano; ties that reciprocally add to the strength and harmony of their performance.

The only problem with Cano's performance was its brevity. Because of the time factor involved with producing two shows in one evening, Cano had to watch the clock during the first show, and their time on stage was sadly abbreviated because of this. Perryscope Productions' last-minute decision to convert the evening into two short shows was unfair to the people who bought tickets at first, if only for the reason that the starting time was moved up a half-hour from the time indicated on the ticket, causing many people to miss the first part of the opening act, (which proved, however, to be not such a great loss).

To label Cano as Canada's best band is now totally irrelevant: they are as good as or better than almost any band recording anywhere today. They have no pretences about being representative of Canada, (though they are infinitely more to brag about than Rush, Prism, Dan Hill, etc., etc.), and they do not need to protect themselves with the cloak of contrived patriotism. Simply, they are Cano, one of the world's great contemporary bands.



Guitarist Dave Burt.

Starcastle meets Black Sabbath Switching the dial on FM

By Hollis Brown

Appearing as a warm-up act for Cano was Canada's most recent entry into the art-rock spectrum, a three-piece group named FM. Consisting of Cameron Hawkins on multivarious keyboards and synthesizers, Ben Mink on fiddle, mandolin, and mini-guitar and Martin Deller on drums and percussion, FM could at best only achieve a sort of second rate Yes sound.

Though many hints of perhaps even great talent filtered through the indistinguishable mass of sounds that FM created, their half-hour performance was mostly dull, with Hawkins playing totally uninspired and pretentious melodies. He surrounds himself with his costly electronic equipment, highly suggestive of the idiotic heights reached by Rick Wakeman, and plays at a level that needs nothing more than a fifty-dollar children's organ.

Ben Mink, who earned much respectability

through his work with Stringband and the Silver Tractors, seems wasted playing powerhouse chords and meandering lead breaks that go nowhere fast. Mink seemed almost bored with the whole thing, a boredom that was reflected in the audience's obligatory but equally mundane applause.

FM's problem is obvious. They lack a good vocalist, a bass guitar, an adequate songwriter, and some ideas for music other than dated, embarrassing, and irrelevant "space" themes. Their musical aims are ambiguous, Wakeman's,....er, Hawkins' vocals stoop to the level of a wishy-washy jamtart, and their strongest numbers are merely fibreglassed rock and roll.

FM's contrived fantasy-rock seems ridiculous when placed next to the music of Cano, and the former's appearance Tuesday evening certainly dampened the warmth of the evening as a whole. I would have felt much better with an extra half-hour of Cano.