

Entertainment

Mardi Gras: You Should Have Been There

Benefit Show for Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival a Sell out

by Chad Ball

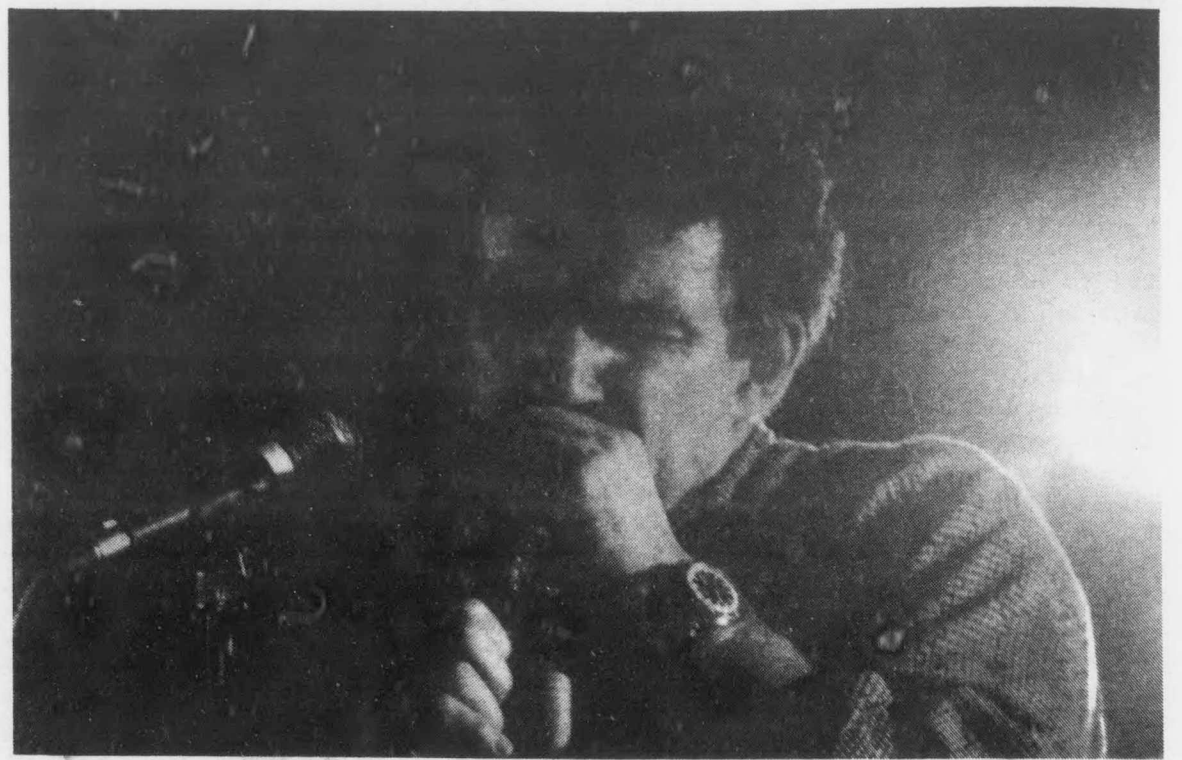
On Feb. 26, a taste of New Orleans came to the Boyce Farmers Market. And if you're a jazz or blues fan and live within 100 miles of Fredericton, you should have been there too. Of course, you would have had to have been early as the majority of the tickets were sold well before the show. Although it was a sell out, there were surprisingly few students in the audience. I'll take a chance at guessing the ten dollar ticket price kept a few away, but given the sorry state that the city's bars are in, it would have been \$10 well spent. But I digress.

Those who did attend were impressed from the moment they got to the door as buskers roamed the building (actually, there were only two that I could find, but I was impressed.) Included in the ticket price was a CD of Harvest Jazz and Blues highlights and ten thousand dollars of gambling "funny money" (about five dollars) and it wasn't long before people were losing most of it playing blackjack or one of the other casino games.

One of the best parts of this whole "New Orleans authenticity" bit was the addition of a Cajun menu. Those who pride themselves on their ability to eat spicy foods unscathed, be warned: Cajun Food works on a time delay. (I believe I was half way through my meal before I felt my throat explode.) Luckily, drinks weren't too pricey.

As interesting as this part was, it

wasn't hard to tell where the action was as local radio celebrity Paddy Gregg took the microphone to announce the first of the evenings two bands. Mr. Gregg did a better than average job getting the crowd excited, allowing us to start at what he called a "slow jog," then warning that soon our "blood would be coursing rapidly." Fredericton's own Downtown Blues Band went on to perform one of the best sets I've ever heard them do. I was particularly impressed by vocalist Paul Campbell who seemed to shift moods to suit whatever song his band performed. My only complaint was that he was barely audible over the heavy drum beat. The Downtown Blues Band proved to be truly versatile musicians as their set included everything from a keyboard/bass inspired cover of Booker T and the M.G.S. (my personal favourite) to more rock styled songs that sounded much like early Gillin James. The audience was even treated to a couple of solos by guitarist Terry Morrison, complete with the always welcome "guitar face" (what solo would be complete without a few shut eyed, closed mouth snarls?) The high point of the set for me, however, was to see my Poli Sci professor (who shall remain nameless) get called to the stage to play a harmonica solo. What can I say? He was good - I was shocked. The headlining band for the evening was Joe Murphy and the Water Street Blues Band from Halifax.



Legendary Maritime Bluesman Joe Murphy cooks on the harp...

(K. Rainville photo)

This was easily the most cohesive blues quartet I have even seen perform. Murphy along with John Lyman (guitar), Greg "Fish" Fancy (Bass), and Doug "Dog" McKay (drums) seemed as comfortable playing in front of a sold out audience as he would to a group of friends. This band complemented the rock/jazz inspired performance of the Downtown Blues Band with a more

mellow bluesy style. Joe Murphy displayed his own talent by playing harmonica, accordion and slide guitar. Even if Murphy couldn't get everybody up and dancing, it was obvious that this band had made a connection with the audience that just may not have been there in the first performance.

The proceeds from the Mardi Gras

will go towards the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival debt so that it may continue to draw performers as talented as the ones here. Judging from the turnout and enthusiasm at this event, the interest is definitely present and jazz is definitely alive in Fredericton. Special thanks to Paddy Gregg for the information and to the popcorn girl for being there.

GENRECIDES MICHAEL EDWARDS

The Orchids

Striving For The Lazy Perfection

Its here!!! At long last the new album from the Orchids has seen the light of day - was it worth waiting for? You bet; I know its still only February, but I wonder if I will hear a finer album this year. Quite simply, the Orchids are the most refreshing and talented bands to come out of Scotland in the last while, and I really do think that this is the album that could introduce the world to their blissful brand of pop.

And the amount of ground they cover on this their second full-length album is miraculous too - from the acoustic "Prayers To St. Jude" to the dirty guitar on "Beautiful Liar" to the funky synths on the title track. Every aspect of pop is approached and performed in a confident, memorable way. Some of the credit for the clarity of the vision must go to the production by One Dove's Ian Carmichael; he brings with him dancey rhythms that were not exploited fully before. He also brings with him the backing vocals of Pauline Hynde who compliments the gentle, hazy voice of James Hackett so beautifully. She even takes the spotlight for one of the thirteen highlights of this album "A Kind Of Eden" - Motown meets Glas-

gow for the sweetest of dreamy pop songs. Add some rather mean samples of Vanna White for rather hi-tech "A Living Ken And Barbie" and you have one of the most perfect albums that Sarah Records have ever released.

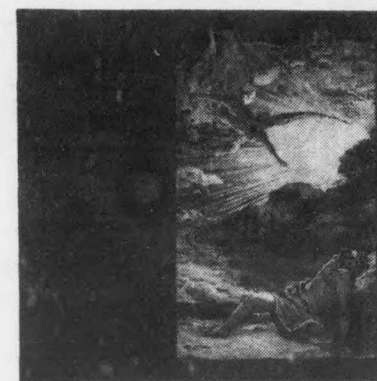
I thought that it was going to be hard to top 1991's *Unholy Soul*, but with *Striving For The Lazy Perfection* the Orchids have really outdone themselves. The lyrics still stay on this side of mournful (St. Jude is the patron saint of lost causes, and thus unrequited love...), but they do mournful so damned well that it feels like the most natural place to spend your time. Buy this album and you will never have to use the 'skip track' button on your CD player ever again. The Orchids can stop striving for the lazy perfection - they've found it, and the world is a better place for it. (*Widely Distributed Records, 1412 W. Touby, Chicago, IL., 60626-2622, USA*)

Teenage Fanclub

Thirteen

The follow up to 1991's *Bandwagonesque* takes Teenage Fanclub even closer to their obvious idols Big Star - the guitars are more jangly, the vocals more harmonious and hardly any feedback to be heard at all. As the years pass, the Fannies seem to be mellowing which isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, some of the material

is the most appealing that they have ever done - you probably won't hear a more infectious song than "The Cabbage" in the next while, and the same can be said about several other songs. But the problem lies in the fact that *Bandwagonesque* was just so good that it was going to be almost impossible to improve upon it. Not to say that *Thirteen* isn't a wonderful album - it could



almost be the album that Big Star always threatened to make - its just that in inevitable comparison it loses out. Its still worth picking up for the best Byrdian material this side of the seventies.

Cocteau Twins Four Calender Cafe

Another return, this time after three years away. But the only surprise here is that you can actually understand vast portions of the words being sung. Has Elizabeth Fraser lost her mystique?

"IF IT'S NOT SCOTTISH..."

MICHAEL TAKES A LAST LOOK AT TUNES FROM THE HOMELAND

Well, she does in some places where the lyrics turn out to be a little on the syrupy and even banal side ("or are you toxic for me...?") and you can't help but wish she was still singing in her language of sounds. But apart from that little gripe, this is the Cocteau Twins doing what they do best - sweeping waves of swirly guitars layered over a voice which isn't quite as adventurous as it used to be. The sound does echo back to their older albums, particularly *Victorialand*, but now they seem to be very much mellowing with age. It appears that we will never see the likes of *Blue Bell Knoll* again. Even though, if you enjoy the Cocteau Twins then this will fill the gap for the next three years. And maybe then...

And just to finish off my "Scotland Über Alles" columns, I thought I should list, in no particular order, some of the essential albums by Scottish artists that you should try to pick up. Some of these may be difficult to find, but if you hunt around in second hand shops for the older ones then you may find success.

1. *Aztec Camera High Land, Hard Rain* (1983) - Will there ever be a more perfect teenage angst song than "We Could Send Letters"?

2. *The Jesus And Mary Chain Psychocandy* (1985) - From white noise to Spectroscopic ballads, the Reid Brothers

have a lot to answer for.

3. *Orange Juice The Heater's On Fire* (1993) - A wonderful single compilation from Postcard. Essential.

4. *Teenage Fanclub Bandwagonesque* (1991) - The Byrds meet Big Star meet the Pastels. Another turning point in Scottish music.

5. *Primal Scream Screamedelica* (1991) - Never before or since has guitar pop and dance music fused so effortlessly.

6. *Momus Tender Pervert* (1988) - A more deliciously bizarre collection of songs you could never hope to find.

7. *The Waterboys Fisherman's Blues* (1988) - The album where their mix of folk and rock works most effectively.

8. *The Pastels Sitting Pretty* (1989) - They can't really sing, they can't really play but yet there is something so charming about this bunch.

9. *Cocteau Twins Blue Bell Knoll* (1988) - The album with Elizabeth's most incredible singing. If only it didn't end so quickly...

10. *del Amitri* (1985) - Wordy lyrics and nervous guitar work; and the world sighed apathetically. Typical.