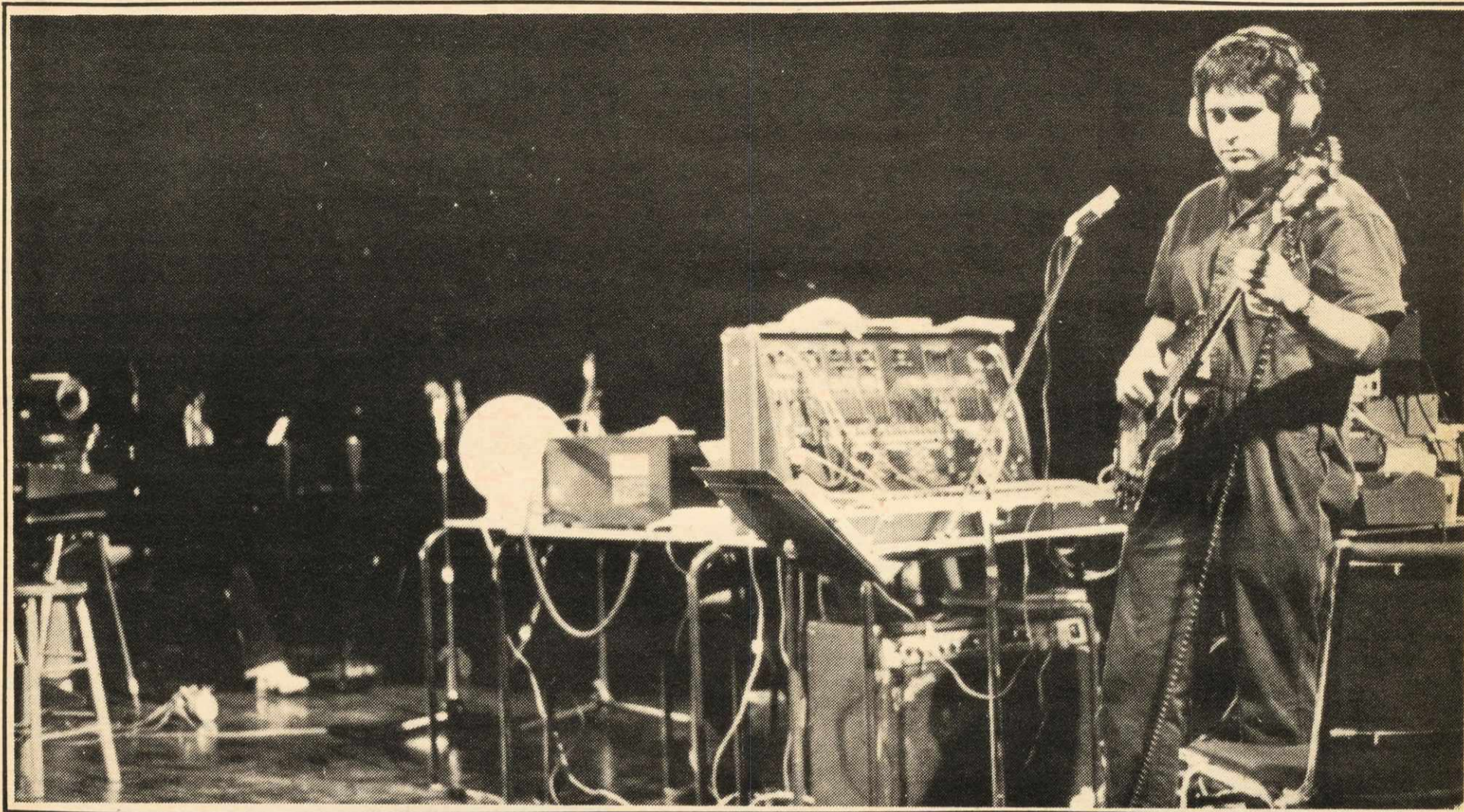


Musical collectives with many alternatives



Alternate Music presented an interesting collection of innovative music, film and poetry at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium.

by Kim Rilda van Feggelen

The alternate music concert (or 'event,' as it was sub-billed) last Wednesday, March 30 at the Sir James Dunn Theatre was an interesting study in modern musical styles. The evening, presented by three musical collectives, began with local group PBX.

Musically, PBX is hard to define. The band seemed quite genuinely concerned with appearing as serious modern classical-experimental musicians. Apart from a few innovative experimental twists to their music — for example, at one point during the piece 'F-Clones,' flautist Steve Slater threw rocks on the floor, creating a lovely sharp and stark sound that contrasted well with the music — PBX seemed to be left trying to decide between rock and jazz sounds. The merging of these three types of music is both PBX's attraction and fault — the music just sort of sits in a stylistic limbo. I both like and dislike this; it will be interesting to see how the group develops.

PBX was followed by David Barteaux, a former member of PBX, who played a short piano solo of his own composition entitled "Pedal." The title of the piece was obviously a clue to its composition — Barteaux played a series of chords while sustaining a single note in the background using the pedal on the piano. A creative idea.

After a brief intermission during which two excellent animated short

films were shown (both with music composed by John Gray), the stage was set for "Three Poets." Both Steven Slater and David Kimber read their own poems to the audience (the third poet, Sandra

Levin, was ill and unable to attend). This section of the concert proved to be a waste of time, as it was obvious that neither poet had had experience reading to an audience with a delivery that was hurried, mumbled and impossible to understand.

John S. Gray then took the stage with an air of confidence to perform his newest composition, "Circumvention," consisting of an improvised piano solo to the

accompaniment of synths, tape and drum machine. The first fifteen minutes of the piece sounded jazzier than his earlier stuff, and he used the piano to effectively punctuate a tape of voice loops taken from speeches about nuclear weapons and classical composition. This section of the piece was quite entertaining.

The tape loops stopped, however, and another half-hour of composition was doomed by

Wagner-ian runs and crescendos. Gray's lust for the piano may be understood, but is not shared, by his audience. A quote from the tape section of the piece seems to fit the composition, and the composer, to a tee "I don't know why I'm so romantic."

After another brief intermission came a set by local synth/bass player Phollop Willing PA, with friends backing him up. He was playing his sixth song before I realized that he was playing the entire

set as one continuous piece — which was a mistake, as it blatantly showed that all of Willing's music somehow sounds the same. After the sixth piece or so, drummer Clancy Donnelly strolled on stage and added a much needed texture to the drone. A drum machine just doesn't give Willing's voice a strong enough backing.

In all, it was an interesting evening (and, I might add, very well organized) giving some much needed exposure to local musicians.

Nylons make 50's classic's now

by Kevin Yarr

When The Nylons first appeared on stage in Toronto, in May of 1979, they introduced at that time a new form to modern popular music. They sang *a capella*, without instruments.

The group has caught on very quickly. Since then, they've released two albums, and performed to rave reviews across Canada and the U.S.

The Nylons now consist of Paul Cooper, Marc Connors, Claude Morrison and Arnold Robinson. All are original members, except Arnold Robinson, who joined the group in March of 1981. I spoke with Paul Cooper and Claude Morrison at the Lord Nelson on Wednesday, March 23. The Nylons played Wolfville on the 24th, and the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium on the 25th.

Gazette: What sort of music are we going to be hearing here on Friday?

Paul: Our single, *Silhouettes*, which has been played here a lot in Halifax, is an old 50's classic. But our music really spans a lot of music periods and different styles.

It's a collection of a lot of different things.

Claude: Well, on the album we have a couple of tunes which are very 40's, you know, *Bumble Boogie* and *Romance*, 50's, *Silhouettes*, *Town Without Pity*, and I guess the stuff that we've been writing has a more contemporary sensibility to it.

Gazette: How much have you been writing?

Claude: Half of each album.

Gazette: Do you expect you'll be doing more writing in the future?

Paul: Oh yeah! We all like to write. I love writing. So, for sure. Of course it's nice to do old songs, too.

Claude: Writing is like tailoring your material.

Gazette: There's a lot more theatre experience in this group than music experience. Do you find that helpful?

Paul: Oh yeah, a lot. I think that's helped a lot in the group's success, because our show isn't just four people standing there singing. We

do a lot of dancing around, costume changes, lots of theatrics. We travel with sets, costumes and lighting. Things like that all come from our theatrical background.

Gazette: Arnold (Robinson) does your percussion?

Paul: Most of it, yeah. On the album we had someone who actually programmed a computer for us. We worked with Steve Negus from Saga on that. In the show its either on tape or we do it ourselves.

Gazette: Do you ever have drums on stage?

Paul: In some shows, not here, not out east.

Gazette: Do you expect you'll be getting more into instruments in the future?

Claude: Not is we call ourselves The Nylons. I have nothing against instruments, but I think when people hear that name they expect to hear that thing which makes us distinctive, that we're pretty much vocals only, except for percussion.

To add instruments would be

taking some of the uniqueness. Not that it wouldn't sound good, not that we're ideologically opposed to instruments, I think it would be a bit misleading.

Our going with the *a capella* format is our choice. As such, people have come to expect something, there's a reaction you get upon hearing the name The Nylons; voices; *a capella*. I think to put a band behind the group would be misleading.

The Nylons played two capacity audiences in Halifax that Friday. I was part of the late show crowd. A very loud crowd indeed. The Nylons can perform better than anyone has a right to expect. My only regret is that I had to remain in my seat for the performance. I had a powerful urge to dance.

I would call The Nylons one of the few decent acts that Canada has produced. They mentioned that they might be back this summer. I suggest you would have to be crazy to miss them.