

Marceau was great, but flaws showed

By DAVID SCHATZKY

Marcel Marceau is a sublime artist, a technical virtuoso, but he is not a genius.

He is sensitive, feeling, aesthetically eloquent, disciplined,

but not as universally communicative as his own definition of his very demanding art dictates.

In other words, the performance Marceau gave at Burton Monday night was brilliant, but not always

satisfying. There is a self-indulgence in his work that gives it a driving force, rivets our attention on his supple frame and expressive face, but does not always let us in on the meaning behind the effort.

Effortless he is not. And sometimes his effort is directed to a classic correctness of gesture rather than a clarification of situation or illuminating delineation of character.

But one leaves the performance feeling that one has entered a special world of symbol, reality and imagination — sometimes unwisely mixed — that is gripping, fascinating and usually as significant in terms of human existence as it is entertaining.

There is no question that mime, as Marceau practises it, is a high art. It seems almost damning to

say that Marceau's one-man show was almost perfect. As one of my childhood heroes, he, more than anyone else, demonstrated the magic of theatre.

But now, 15 years later, magic is not enough, and the slightest frailty or flaw destroys the illusion, just as our imperfections disillusion us in life itself.

Marceau attempts, and often succeeds in showing us, if not what we are, who he is. To do this silently and beautifully is a great skill. Six hundred of us were fortunate to have assisted in his projection of the tragicomic vision.

Back-up group has album

By STEVE GELLER

Several years ago Rick Hall started a recording studio down in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. At that time he had very little to work with but a great deal to hope for. Hall's aspired goal became evident as he named his operation Fame Recording, Publishing and Productions Incorporated.

In order to find a first-rate studio house band, Hall recruited musicians from Nashville and Pensacola as well as from his own native town of Muscle Shoals. Accordingly, they were christened The Fame Gang.

As Fame Records grew, so did the musical significance of a small town in Alabama as well as the popularity of a group of eight studio musicians. Currently, some of the record world's biggest hits come out of Muscle Shoals, all of them backed by the Fame Gang.

Although on record they usually back such names as Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin or Bobbie Gentry, The Fame Gang have released an album all their own called Solid Gold From Muscle Shoal (Fame SKAO 4200).

As the band is used to playing nothing but hits, their album consists of 16 solid gold singles from the past year, displaying an unexpected musical versatility varying from their soul basis with a range that lends them through songs such as "Sugar, Sugar" to the "Love Theme From Romeo and Juliet".

As would be expected, about half the cuts are soul numbers such as "It's Your Thing" or "Soulful Street" but these would be — could be, heavy tunes are executed in a soft and extremely sophisticated manner in which both good musicianship and inter-group style familiarity is openly displayed.

The ability of The Fame Gang to tone down a song without distorting the original quality, while at the same time adding their own subtle interpretations is also strikingly evident in the presentation of the

non-soul numbers such as Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline", "Spinning Wheel" (a Blood, Sweat and Tears original) or the Lennon-McCartney "Get Back".

The vocal work is minimal. There is never a lead singer to any song while the vocals that do exist to complement the music are

performed in a soft chorus-like chanting group effort.

Solid Gold captures a pleasant mood similar to that of a highly sophisticated night club orchestra and is a fitting album to result the efforts of the Fame Gang, the most respected back-up studio group in the music business.

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