

Carson Cole calls collect

interview by Ron Kuipers

"It's nice being an underdog right now, because you don't have a lot of pressure to live up to anything." Thus states Carson Cole, a roots rocker from Brownfield, Alberta who will be playing at the Power Plant this weekend.

That's the advantage of being an independent musician — lots of freedom, but no guarantees. Yet Cole has some proven weapons in his arsenal. His manager is Larry Wanagas of Bumstead productions. You know, the guy who handles the business end

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of the things for such artists as k.d. lang and Colin James.

"Basically, we're just worried about getting a real good live show together," states Cole, "and just play, play, and play some more." He has had some bites from record companies, but his management hasn't accepted anything yet. Cole's approach is to let his music speak for itself, and hope that everything else follows.

With all that's happening in his life right now, Cole still doesn't feel much negative pressure being an independent artist. Much of this he credits to the fact that he has

competent management in place to take care of the paperwork, leaving him free to right and develop his music. "As long as I can eat, and have a place to sleep, and play my own tunes instead of cover material," Cole claims, "I'm happy."

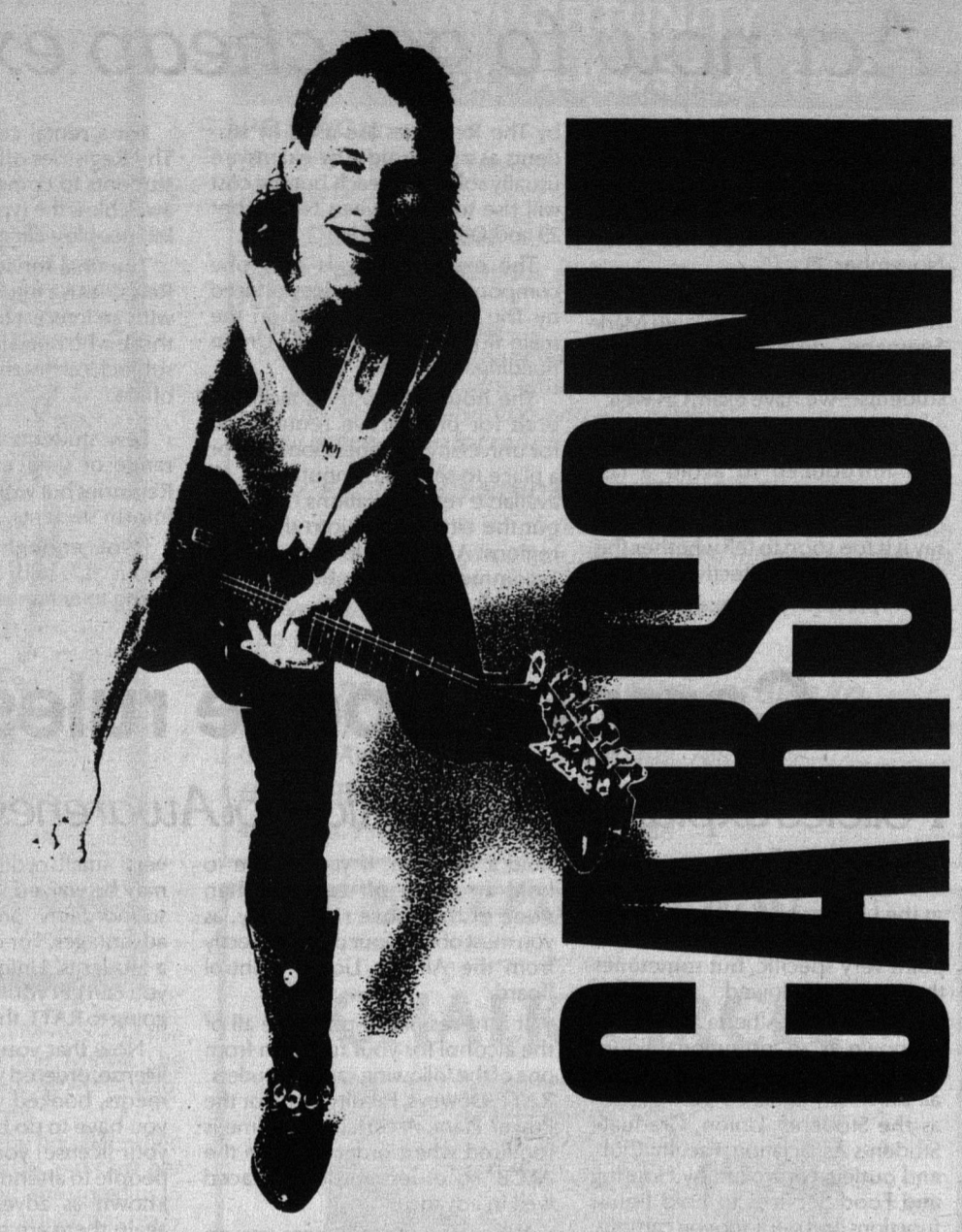
Things are getting pretty hectic for Cole around this time, but he still maintains a positive attitude. "It still amounts to working real hard, and getting out there and pushing real hard," Cole says. He emphasizes the need to get out there and "put on a lot of miles" in order to expose his music.

This work ethic might have something to do with the fact that Carson was born and raised on a farm, and in fact was speaking to me from his farm in Brownfield, Alberta. He says that "without trying" the values of farm life might sneak their way into his music. "I try to be real and honest with my music," he says, "I'm not trying to be something I'm not." He adds, laughing, "I'm sort of a redneck at heart, I guess."

Carson started his career in the Gospel music scene, but became disillusioned with all the profit being gleaned from religion in America. "I got out of it in the nick of time," he says. But he doesn't regret any of it, because the Gospel scene was his first exposure to the business side of the industry, and he did get to record an album and write his own music.

Cole describes his music as "straight-ahead, heartland rock and roll." But what he really emphasizes is the honesty of his music and his unwillingness to compromise that. "I hope that I'm reaching a space in the market that people like," he says, "but I'm not really concerned about that. I'm just doing what I do."

Carson Cole will be playing at The Power Plant this Thursday through Saturday (November 23-25). Tickets are available at the door.



Murphy spreads himself too thin in latest project

Harlem Nights
Famous Players Theatres

review by Kevin Law

The box office success enjoyed by Eddie Murphy over the last couple of years has given him a lot of power in Hollywood. It has also made him ambitious. In combining his power and ambition, Murphy has produced his first large scale project, and the results are mixed.

The main problem with *Harlem Nights* is that it's too ambitious. Murphy wrote, directed and stars in this period film about a pair of black night club owners in the roaring twenties, and he has spread his talent pretty thin, for he is largely unable to match the scope of the film's aspirations.

Part of the problem lies in Murphy's distinctive cast. *Harlem Nights* is filled with a profusion of talented black actors and comedians, along with a few talented white actors. This gathering of characters leads Murphy to develop numerous sub-plots, ultimately failing to focus on the main story.

The story essentially revolves around the threatened takeover of a Harlem nightclub by a powerful mob boss. The club makes money and the mob wants a cut, but the club owners set their antagonists up for a fall, with predictable results.

Murphy plays Quick, the temperamental adopted son of Sugar Ray, owner of the club by the same name. Ray is played by Richard Pryor in an unusually understated performance. Pryor establishes a quiet, easy going manner throughout the entire picture. He's good as a character who is always introspective, even in the face of adversity, a fine humble change from some of the craziness he has indulged in before.

Murphy is also somewhat subdued in his characterization, at least in comparison to the wise-cracking persona of previous ventures. His on-screen attitude is still annoyingly sarcastic and coarse. Murphy's preference for scatological phrases is getting a bit tiresome, as is his blatantly chauvinistic attitude toward woman. There is one long scene where Della Reese, who plays a loud, over-



Mobsters, madames, and Murphy

Eddie Murphy absolutely stretches his elastic talent as he writes, directs, and stars in *Harlem Nights*.

bearing Madam, beats Murphy good in a back alley fist-fight, and Reese's performance here is a gem. Despite this initial feminist victory, Eddie gets the final say. He punches Della a few times, then pulls a pistol and shoots her big toe clean off. Talk about Freudian symbolism.

There are many other individual performances in many long scenes, both good and bad. Danny Aiello for example, is fine as a crooked cop working for the mob, while Redd Foxx is completely wasted as one of

Sugar Ray's eccentric employees.

To his credit, Murphy as a director knows how to work a camera functionally, and he's very successful at evoking the mood of the era. The set design, clothes and hairstyles, music and lighting are all authentic, and all the elements are nicely shot in a kind of muted sepia tone by director of photography, Woody Owens.

Murphy's ability to tell a story is not as strong. The film's action is so low key, it moves slower than Mississippi mud on a hot

Sunday afternoon, and Murphy continually strays into subplots, often languishing much too long on individual scenes. Murphy's story is hardly original either. The film has many obvious borrowed elements from other period films of this type, most notably *The Sting*.

It's nice to see a film made by and about blacks, and there are undoubtedly many good stories to be told about the black experience, but this isn't really one of them. Spike Lee does it much better.