

Arts

John Brennan and the All Stars

by Gisele Marie Baxter

John Brennan and the Allstars, a local band with big plans, will be providing their own brand of musical entertainment this week in the Grawood Lounge, on March 4, 5 and 6. They'll have an album out soon, possibly in late April, as part of an ambitious promotion scheme, so if you catch them now, you'll have a good chance to sample the broad range of music they're capable of producing.

John Brennan, lead singer/keyboardist/composer, comes from North Sydney; he played with and toured Eastern Canada with a number of local bands while studying at Dalhousie University and St. Mary's. After three years at the Berkley School of Music in Boston, where he studied arranging, composition and voice, Brennan returned to Halifax and formed Lone Wolf Music Production, which handles the business aspect of the Allstars.

The Allstars currently consist of John Brennan, Alex Vaughan (lead guitar and vocals), John Hollis (saxophone), Pat Riley (bass guitar) and Don Chapman (drums). Vaughan's name will be familiar to anyone who follows the club scene in the city; he has also done quite a bit of TV and studio work. This band can handle a variety of types of music, from rhythm and blues to jazz-rock fusion to pop, and even country and swing. Though a lot

of the Allstars' material is original, they offer their own versions of songs by artists such as Lee Rit-enour, The Brecker Brothers, Rod Stewart and The Police as well. Their sets at the Grawood should feature some songs from the upcoming album.

This album is produced by Mark Goldman, a Juno award-winner, for Radio Canada Interna-

tional, a division of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Goldman is very enthusiastic about this project, and has been since he first heard Brennan's original material; everyone involved hopes that the release of this album can generate more enthusiasm for the band and for Brennan's talents as a musician and writer. Production took place at Solar Audio in Dartmouth last

December, and was finished at Son Quebec in Montreal early in February; final mixing will be completed this month. The band is currently on the local university circuit, and hope to do some shows in Montreal and Toronto in the summer, possibly using a larger band.

John Brennan and the Allstars came together as a band last

summer, and already they've garnered positive reaction both regionally and nationally. They have strong ambitions for future success, and the determination to see them through seems to be there. So, if you want to catch a local band with an album coming out soon, catch these five musicians at the Grawood on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights this week.

A Special Music

Review: New Order,
Movement (Factory FACD 05)

by Gisele Marie Baxter

From the first of "Dreams never end," with its plaintive guitar chords, impulsive snagging beat, and hypnotic vocal, it's obvious that New Order's **Movement** is special music. It catches at you, draws you into its atmosphere, and while you can't help thinking of Joy Division, ultimately New Order is its own band.

After Ian Curtis's death in 1980, the other members of Joy Division knew they had to continue, but guitarist Bernard Albrecht, bassist Peter Hook and drummer Steve Morris realized that continuing did not mean duplicating. The influence of past work, such as the **Closer** album, is still heavy, but there's also a strong sense that this is a new band, breaking new ground, exploring the possi-

bilities of rock on its own terms. The result is often very danceable music, with tight but physical rhythms, and the musicians, who now include a second guitarist, Gillian, mesh their talents with brilliance. Albrecht's singing is reminiscent of Ian Curtis's style but not his voice; it doesn't have the same complexities, but it could be more directly accessible if brought upfront in the mix.

The eight songs here, which are beautifully produced by the very talented Martin Hannett, contain some promising indications. The touch of Eastern influence on "Truth" is piercing and sensual as it insinuates its way into your soul, while the drum-guitar interplay on "Senses" is electrifying. But it's the final three songs on **Movement** which make this music truly special. "The him" is sad, poignant, awesome and frightening, countering ethereal,



hymnlike moments with an urgent energy sometimes breaking free; it's a song of despair, yet also of desperate spiritual longing. The synthesizer layering on "Doubts even here" is dreamlike and solemn, and while the song can be gentler than New Order generally is, the drums keep intruding, martial and compelling. "Don't throw our joy away," Bernard pleads, in one of those phrases that seizes you. It's an exquisite song.

"Denial" picks up the pace to end the album, with some New Psychedelic guitar work over

machine-gun sharp percussion driving along this edgy dance-rock. As I've said, the Joy Division influence is still heavy, and that in itself can lend this music its depressing moments. Yet there's something else, in the emphasis on insistent rhythms, in the frequently captivating directness of this music, which makes me see New Order as a band which is striving to break out, to set its own precedents. Joy Division was crucial for a number of reasons; I think New Order can be special as well, for its own reasons.

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