

Entertainment

"I was an average student"

Artist Gerry Dotto definitely dynamic

by Colleen Weber

The most intriguing quality about Gerry Dotto is the fact that he seems so unlike what an artist should be. Wearing a baseball cap, tee shirt, knee-baring jeans and black sneakers, one is liable to miss the artist for the man. He confounds any notion of artist as the pretentious, eccentric, social non-conformist. Gerry Dotto is just a regular guy who also happens to be a dedicated and accomplished graphic artist.

Like most young Canadians, Gerry Dotto comes from modest rather than miraculous beginnings. He was born in Edmonton in 1958 and has lived in Alberta all his life choosing only to vary his local address.

Today, residing in Sherwood Park with his wife and three children, situated just a few doors down from his parent's home, Dotto jokes about having lived on the same street all his life.

Not to say that Dotto hasn't travelled. "I've been as far east as Winnipeg." There was a brief two week excursion to London and Paris during his last year of high school. When asked why he was never possessed by an urgent desire to leave Alberta and explore the great beyond, Dotto just shrugs and stares calmly, appearing as though the thought had never really occurred to him. So much for the conception of the young artist trekking across foreign lands in search of an artistic identity. With Dotto one gets the distinct impression that there was never any need for a search due to an innate confidence in his artistic ability.

Believe it or not, Dotto did not spend all his time drawing as a boy. "I built model cars and planes but I never drew as a child." Dotto was satisfied "always knowing" he could draw. It wasn't until his post-secondary years that he decided to exercise his artistic talent.

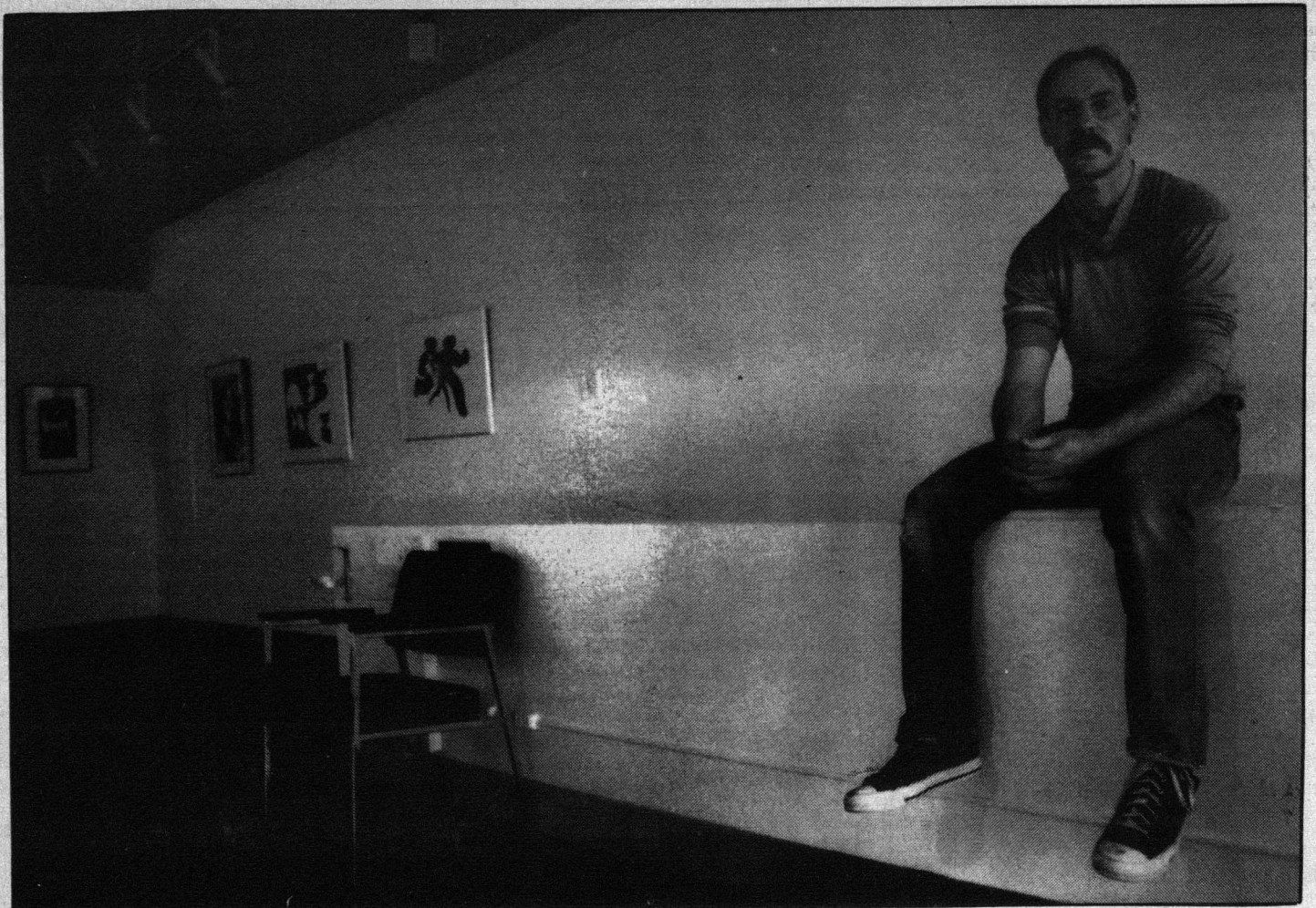
However, even as a visual communications major at the Alberta College of Art in Calgary from 1977 to 1980, Dotto did not fully heed his artistic calling. In his reserved, soft-spoken manner Dotto gives a vague recollection of those Calgary years. "I was an average student." Dotto was not really interested in the commercial bent of the visual communications program. He preferred the design oriented courses which gave him the opportunity to develop the tightly rendered, black and white graphic style he has become noted for today.

Finally, in 1982 fate graced the life of Gerry Dotto and the artist within him was acknowledged. Since then his life has followed a course familiar to most young artists struggling to make a name for themselves.

Invariably it comes down to economics: a young artist cannot survive on art alone. For Gerry Dotto this has led to employment in a wide range of professions which have included plumbing, brick laying, and working in a paper mill. He is currently employed as a graphic artist for the Alberta Access Network, CKUA. Consequently, Dotto must subordinate his artistic career to that of his working profession and, not to mention, his roles as husband and father.

Despite the demand on his time, Dotto is forever preparing for art competitions or events. It is quite likely that the life of this multi-professional has contributed to the progress and development of his art. Working on three or four pieces at a time, Dotto is "always trying to think in different ways." Most of his ideas are drawn from his own everyday experiences: chatting around the kitchen table or just leafing through a magazine. Ideas in the guise of newspaper clippings, photographs or expressions are all elaborated upon and incorporated into his sketchbook giving him an inexhaustible supply of artistic possibilities.

Gerry Dotto is truly dedicated to his work as an artist. If he is not busy preparing for an upcoming competition or exhibit then he is



Gerry Dotto at ease with art

photo Rob Schmidt

out trying to find some other way to reveal his art to the masses. A true showing of his resourcefulness and ingenuity has to be the occasion when he casually strolled into the Princess Theatre on Whyte Avenue and offered to do their calendar cover. They accepted and in return Dotto received a three month pass. Sweet deal! Dotto thought so, too.

A few years ago he also produced a couple of covers for the famed *Edmonton Magazine*. The covers which resulted were quantum leaps from the standard glossy photos used and presumably were not favored much by the public and/or managing editor. Whereas the Princess graciously purchased a Dotto print for their public collection, the *Edmonton Magazine* has never contacted him since.

Despite the hard-knocks, Dotto speaks favorably with regards to the Edmonton art scene. In fact, it was Art Park held in Borden Park which afforded him his first big break. Through his exposure there he and fellow graphic artist, Al Pavlis, were granted their first showing at Dante's (now known to us all as Andante's). This led to an exhibition at Weinlos (Books) and eventually onto a number of group exhibitions throughout the province.

Being a member of the Alberta Society of Artists has given him the opportunity to be involved in group as well as solo exhibitions held within the province. His work is currently part of an A.S.A. juried group exhibition at the Alberta Pavillion located on the Expo '86 site. Expo '86 is special for Dotto because it gives him his first real international

exposure.

Dedicated. Calm. Easy-going. Optimistic. Gerry Dotto works to realize his dream — the day when he can pursue his art on a full-time basis. As for his future development, "Everything is wide open." He is interested in incorporating text (words) into his visual images, an extension of his current device of using titles to give his images their extra humorous punch. Eager to commit his ideas to paper, Dotto has also toyed with the idea of composing a book — the ideal combination of text and visual imagery.

Blue eyes. Firm gaze. Gerry Dotto is an artist intent on exploring all areas of the art field. Don't let the baseball cap or the soft-spoken manner fool you. This is a man whose life and art reflect the same dynamic principle: they are "growing all the time."

Syndicate *Out of the Grey*

The Dream Syndicate
Out Of The Grey
(Big Time/Polygram)

review by Mike Spindloe

The Dream Syndicate has been with us for five years now, marching on in relative obscurity simply because they've been pegged as being a little too offbeat and aggressive for mainstream radio to embrace.

Their first full-length LP, *The Days of Wine and Roses* (1982), checked in with an impressive slash-and-drone guitar sound that had critics scrambling for superlatives and also garnered them significant college airplay. Their second LP, *Medicine Show* (1984), was less immediately appealing, a moody swirl of lyrical catharsis that has nevertheless aged well.

The future of the band seemed uncertain following a couple of personnel changes, but they've bounced back with *Out Of The*

Grey, which, as the title suggests, brings the band's direction into focus while establishing a more accessible sound. Lead vocalist Steve Wynn presents us with a batch of songs that, while thematically linked, fall just short of a concept album.

It's no mean feat to write intelligent lyrics that fall into place in the narrow confines of a rock and roll song, but Wynn has done just that. The vantage point is that of a perpetual traveller who has finally arrived at his destination and finds that he has time to sit down and take a look back. Nothing too heavy here; just simple, evocative statements that ring true.

The Dream Syndicate has not forgotten how to rock out either. Stunning guitar interplay between Wynn and newcomer Paul Cutler paces the band through a set of what basically amounts to good old dirtyass rock and roll. There's plenty of hooks, to be sure, but the real treat is what's going on around them. Most of the songs are fast,

even danceable if you've got an open mind about it, but in a controlled sort of way.

Out Of The Grey deserves to bring The Dream Syndicate the wider audience they've no doubt been waiting for. As is evident from the lyrical themes, this is another stop on the road for a still young band that is just coming into their prime.

Note to wary consumers: The cassette version of *Out Of The Grey* contains two extra tracks, a stunt which the record companies have been pulling for years now and, unfortunately, getting away with. The rationale is to encourage you to buy the cassette, which is cheaper to produce than the vinyl. This is called a RIPOFF. And the record companies are doing it to everyone who prefers to buy those big black frisbees. Still, in this case the two extra tracks are worth hearing (to add insult to injury the lyrics to the extra tracks are printed on the LP innersleeve), so it's up to you . . .