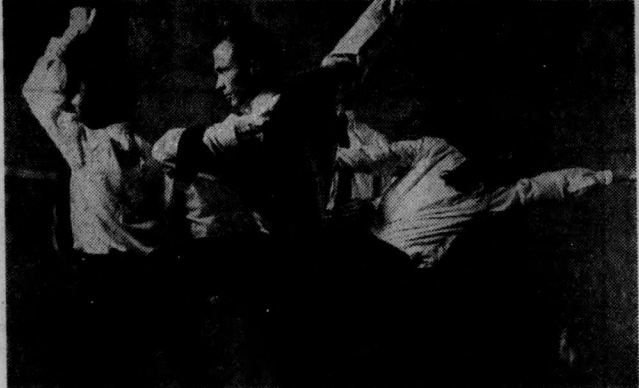


The Talented TDT



"DANCE ME TO THE END OF LOVE": Toronto Dance Theatre perform in town tomorrow.

CHRIS BARNES

THE BRUNSWICKAN

On the still stage, musical impulses reflect the sinuous movements of a dancer's body, hip swivels and vivacious physical expressions. This is the art of the Toronto Dance Theatre (TDT) which has been in the vanguard of

Canadian dance creation and performance since 1968. So what is this theatre and why is it interesting?

Experimental devotees may consider TDT old-fashioned while others consider them exotic. The continually delicate balance and freshness of the group lies in the company's commitment to creativity

in which familiar things are bent out of shape until something new emerges. Their repertoire is filled with high-energy and intensely physical works that bring the audiences' imagination into play while blatantly expressing different mood shifts.

Viewers will not see dancers recite monologues, wear combat boots or perform in the nude. Rather, the company will be presenting *Visible Distance*, *Artemis Madrigals*, *Fjeld* and *Pinko Slink* on November 16 at The Playhouse. This is a presentation of the ongoing UNB/S 'U Creative Arts 'On the Town' series. The audience will be dazzled with prolific choreographic craftsmanship, intellectually challenging content, intense mood and emotion and superbly trained dancers.

For those who may think that an evening of contemporary dance is unfathomably boring and incomprehensible, perhaps a quick profile of *Pinko Slink* may change your mind. This piece is a tribute to a Portuguese espresso coffee with just a drop of hot sweet foam. The

dancers, or their steps, do not 'drip'; rather, their caffeinated movements add energy and excitement to music that demands joyful bursts.

In the other three pieces, ambiguity, mysteriousness and a playful energy characterize the dancers' precise execution of technique. Ideas are distilled to an essence, leaving images that hint at deeper meanings, but a background of contemporary dance is not necessary to appreciate what is seen onstage.

The four different pieces are presented by Christopher House, TDT's artistic director. Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, he studied political science at the University of Ottawa, grooming himself for a diplomatic career, but was lured away by a dance elective course. Upon completion of his degree he studied dance in New York, Toronto and Montreal. In joining TDT, he was recognized as a superb dancer who possessed amazing choreographic abilities and later was appointed to the position of Artistic Director. He has received numerous awards for his choreography.



The first time I saw The Inbreds, they were opening for The Rheostatics so the bar was a little on the crowded side. That meant I couldn't see the stage at all - I could simply hear the wonderful music and that was it. And I couldn't quite work out how many people were in the band (I guessed a conservative 'three'), and when I finally found out that there were only two members, I was a little taken aback - their bass and drums sound was unique, and very appealing.

Their third album, *It's Sydney Or The Bush*, is their first to come out on a major label and that means that they had a little bit of a budget to play with. And where better to spend that budget than in the recording studio, adding some polish that was lacking on their previous two releases. The problem is

that the stripped-bare sound was the thing that made The Inbreds stand out from everyone else, and by trying to re-invent themselves even a little bit (by adding strings, or a real guitar) they lose some of their individuality. That doesn't mean that they aren't still producing some nice pop music, it just means that they sound a bit more like other bands (The Superfriendz spring to mind) at times. There are some 'classic' Inbreds moments like 'Drag Us Down' and 'North Window', but you can regard this as their first real studio album.

Rick Rubin's crusade to restore rock icons back to their rightful position in the eyes of the record-buying public continues. After doing such a great job on Johnny Cash a few years ago, he has turned his hand to coaxing a new album out of 60's folkster Donovan. Donovan will always be best remembered for his string of hits in the late 60's, including 'Sunshine Superman', 'Mellow Yellow' and 'Hurdy Gurdy Man' (some of which turned up in the recent movie *I Shot Andy Warhol*), but has been in relative obscurity ever since. That doesn't mean his influences weren't felt in the music world, though - John Lennon and the rest of The Beatles had all kinds of nice things to say about him, as do all the other artists that have covered his songs over the years.

The new album, *Sutras*, is a very low-key recording that weaves a subtle spell rather than grabbing you right from the start. Donovan's voice is quite mesmerising, and it pulls you in as he spins tales of mysticism and spirituality. It really isn't a big jump from his earlier work (some musicians of that earlier period are recruited on *Sutras*), but that is the main reason for picking this up. Rick Rubin hasn't tried to compromise Donovan, and that is why *Sutras* is a success. A success on its own terms.

Staying with the 60's in a peculiar kind of way, there is Zumpano. They played a rather wonderful gig in town a couple of weeks back, and they've also just released their second album, *Goin' Through Changes*. But how exactly can they be linked to the 60's? One word: The Zombies. Well, that's two words, I suppose. Anyway, The Zombies were obviously a big influence on Zumpano, and that means that there is a big reliance on the keyboards of Michael Ledwidge to produce some very carefree, catchy pop music that wouldn't have sounded out of place thirty years ago. But I shouldn't take anything away from the band because they add their own personality to the music, and that is particularly true on their new CD. The actual songwriting has come along in leaps and bounds, and this is a much more mature piece of work than their debut - a casual listen to 'The Only Reason Under The Sun' will assure you of that with its complex melody and vocal harmonies. And the eleven other equally memorable songs make this a very, very good album. In fact, I'll even go one step further and say that *Goin' Through Changes* is one of the best albums by a Canadian artist this year, and a near-essential addition to anyone's record collection.



While it may not be possible to pick out a single band that Seely may have been influenced by, a quick listen to *Julie Only* will help you compile a shortlist. Mine mentions Lush, Slowdive, My Bloody Valentine, Stereolab and a few others too, and that hints towards the fact that Seely are probably the kind of band that would fit in well with the rest of the Too Pure stable. And that's a good thing because Seely is Too Pure's first American signing. Another clue to their sound comes from their choice of producer - John McEntire (from Tortoise). Combine all the sounds of all those afore-mentioned bands, and you get Seely. They don't really do anything particularly original, but they do it well and that alone makes *Julie Only* good for a few listens. Over the duration of 14 tracks, things can drag a little but the highlights are very high - 'Wind And World' reminds me of the very early days of Lush while 'Exploring The Planets' has the male/female vocal dynamic that made Slowdive (and now Mojave 3) so special. Ultimately, Seely are just another one of those bands that blend guitars and voices together to produce a swirling aural mess from which something nice emerges. But they do a pretty good job of it, so they get a partial recommendation for that.

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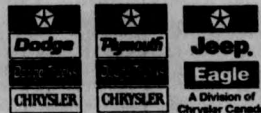
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