

Fat chance against nukes and potato chips

by Cherise Sabey

Fat Chants, the self-proclaimed left-wing swing trio from Edmonton, has recorded an anti-nuclear song, "When the Rivers are Hot," which will be released as a single later this month.

The song is a direct protest against the French multinational company, AMOK, which is mining and selling northern Saskatchewan's great uranium deposits. France, unlike other countries, did not sign an anti-nuclear policy prohibiting the unregulated sale of uranium. They are free to continue this hazardous and capitalistic practice of exploitation for profit.

The flip side of the 45 rpm is "People's Food Song" which chastises the multi-billion dollar a year refined food industry. The song attacks the use of chemicals in the raising of crops and in the refining and processing of commercial junk food. It takes a positive stand in favour of pure farming and good food nutrition.

Fat Chants has been together for two years. About half their material is original music. Their musical style encompasses R & B, reggae, calypso, jazz and rock. This talented trio will be performing at Waldon's "Shadows" lounge, February 19-23.



Allan Stein, Mairi MacLean, and Ross Campbell of Fat Chants, mixing music and politics.

King's last stand at the end of the world

Book review by Greg Harris

The cover of Stephen King's novel *The Stand*, rightfully proclaims it as "a novel of ultimate horror." That's correct, the reader is truly horrified when he realizes that he's wasted his valuable time ploughing through some eight hundred pages of redundant drivel only to be disappointed by an inane conclusion.

King, the author of *Carrie* and *The Shining*, oversteps his capabilities by devoting more time to his subject than it merits, and by attempting to combine horror fiction with moral philosophy. The results are boring and at the end of the novel the reader is left confused as to what the point of the whole thing is.

The story takes place in the United States, five years in the future. Things run amok in an underground testing laboratory and a particularly nasty strain of the flu is let loose. Only a small percentage of the population is immune to this highly contagious respiratory ailment which causes mucous membranes to work overtime; the majority of the people fall prey to the disease and die a painful death by drowning in their own snot.

The survivors pull together in Boulder, Colorado and start to rebuild the good old U.S. of A. But wait! It seems that another group of people, led by a strange man with dark powers, aren't interested in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They have gathered on

the other side of the Rockies and are planning to destroy Boulder. These two forces of Good and Evil clash, Evil is defeated by a nuclear bomb (ugh!), and the world is once again safe for democracy.

King somehow manages to spend seven hundred pages setting the stage for the final scene by developing characters, documenting their cross-country treks, and describing the political formation of the two societies of Good and Evil. Nothing very exciting or unpredictable occurs during this time, and the inevitable effect is simply one of boredom.

Although King's first few frightening scenes do manage to get the adrenalin flowing, the images are eventually over worked; a decaying corpse whose mouth is overflowing with rancid, green puke, soon becomes just another decaying corpse whose mouth is overflowing with rancid, green puke. The grisly imagery becomes ineffective, the story drags on and on, and the reader continues in the blind hope of an exciting conclusion.

But the ending is so predictable, almost dull, that it seems as though even King has finally lost interest in his story.

He closes the tale by having the victorious characters ponder about their future. Instead of wondering whether the diabolical forces of Evil will ever return, which is what they were fighting against throughout the novel, they wonder whether man will ever learn the lessons of the past and stop mucking about with infectious diseases and nuclear weaponry.

These departing comments bring to mind the important question of what King's point was in writing this novel. Was it meant to be merely a horror-fantasy, or was it also intended to provide instructive social comment? By combining these two topics King's 'shadows in the dark' lose their shape, and his moralizing comes across as trite and almost silly.

Loser at large on big screen

Movie review by Marni Stanley

In *Hero at Large* John Ritter plays Steve Nichols, a character actor who identifies too strongly with his Captain Avenger role, and in doing so he avenges himself on an unsuspecting audience.

This film tells the story of a poor actor with integrity from small town U.S.A. who comes to the big city, gets a junk role as a comic book hero and takes it to heart. As a crime fighter with no superhuman abilities, except courage and a stout heart, he attacks vice in every form, undaunted and unrewarded, and at risk to his person. To make a long story mercifully shorter, he gets offered a role in the incumbent Mayor's election campaign and begrudgingly accepts (he would not have done so, you realize, if he had not felt temporarily unloved). The crowd discovers his fraudulent ways and turns on him, but a hero is a hero for all that and another disaster awaits.

A.J. Carothers, who scripted this disaster, must have watched too many *Three's Company* reruns. This film depends on the same kind of cheap sight gags and sexual innuendo as the T.V. show and they even manage to get Ritter into a pink satin bathrobe (for my money Cary Grant did it better 40 years ago in *Bringing Up Baby*).

For his part John Ritter does not transfer well to

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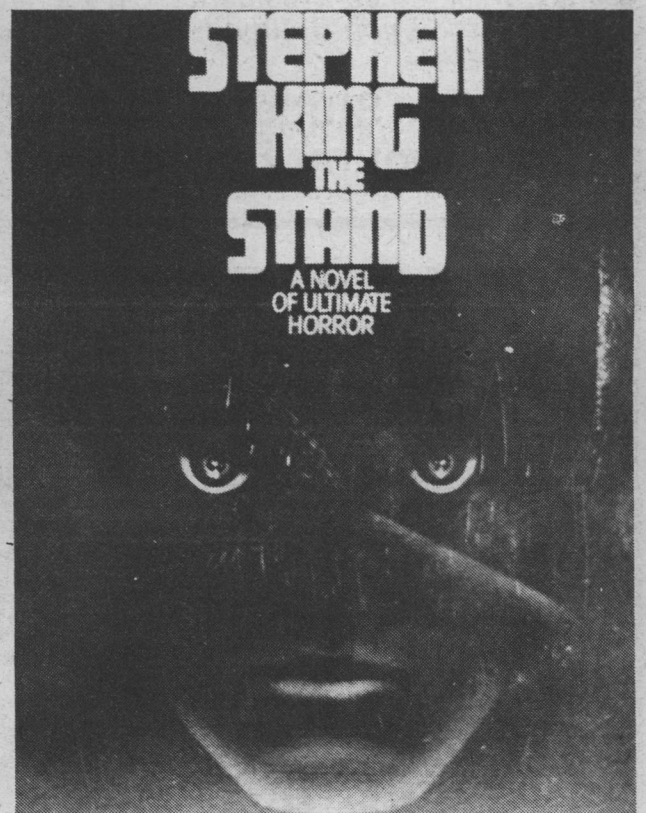
David McFadden is a) very likeable, b) a little weird, c) a gently humorous poet who delights in ferreting out the unusual that always hides in the usual, d) a highly entertaining poet, e) reading in AVL-3 of the Humanities Centre, Thursday Feb. 14 at 12:30 p.m.

McFadden has been writing his own brand of poems for close to twenty years now, presenting himself, as Frank Davey puts it, "as the common man of our time, paying his taxes, loving his children, renting summer cabins, driving his Volkswagen amid the tragi-comic ruins and creations of a Pepsi civilization. He deliberately avoids any association with counter-culture values and 'avant-garde' writing by adopting the disarming, garrulous, and casual style of ordinary-joe speech and by openly acknowledging the lower-middle-class imagery of his day-to-day activities."

But don't be fooled by the ordinariness of his concerns, for McFadden is really a visionary, a kind of lower-case William Blake from steeltown Ontario. Taking a surrealistic view of things as they pass him by, he offers devastatingly comic visions of how it is to meander through life in Canada today.

Recently, McFadden has begun to extend his mastery of the longer poem, especially with the CBC Poetry Contest Award winning *A New Romance* (1979), an amazing and moving exploration of transcendent concerns. As the *Montreal Star* has put it: "It's about time they gave McFadden the Governor General's Award. He's one of those few poets who can claim to have pioneered his own territory... One of Canada's brightest poetic stars."

Other recent books by David McFadden include *On the Road Again* and *I Don't know*. And by the way, the answer to the question is all of the above.



Had King devoted all eight hundred pages to one subject or the other he may have come up with an effective piece of writing. As it stands however, *The Stand* falls into a category somewhere in between trash and mediocrity. It's a time-waster that is better left on the shelf.

the big screen. His rather cloying persona grates on one's sensibilities and his range of gestures (I counted two) are irritating in the extreme. He also gives annoying speeches about "justice," "it's the idea that counts," and "find the hero in yourself" that would have made Marcus Welby in his prime, gnash his teeth in envy.

Anne Archer as the obliging girl next door doesn't fare much better. She gives the two current standard feminine diatribes; the "I am not a thing speech" and the "I have my dreams too" speech, but all comes to naught when the hero captures her heart.

Bert Convey as the P.R. man with a surfeit of feelings is so nauseating as to be believable. There are also a great many extras, New Yorkers mostly, who humiliate themselves in the crowd scenes.

The add for this film suggests that while it is rated family it may not be suitable for younger children. It is my opinion that it probably isn't suitable for anyone, still, if you feel a pressing need to impress a member of the 8 to 12 set this could be your opportunity. But, in all fairness, I thought I'd give the last word on this film to one of the characters, the mayor's campaign manager whose cry, "we need some fresh ideas," could stand as a fitting epitaph for this piece of celluloid drivel.