

# ARTS

## Metaphysical but good

The Game of Our Lives  
Peter Gzowski  
McClelland and Stewart, 1981

review by Kent Blinston

Peter Gzowski was fortunate to have chosen to follow the 1980-81 Edmonton Oilers for his entertaining study of the great Canadian game. The Montreal Canadians would have provided a study of success. The Winnipeg Jets a study of failure and the Toronto Maple Leafs a study of bitterness and dissension.

But in *The Game of Our Lives* Gzowski wanted to tell every story in hockey and only the Oilers had them all. There are the individual stories of the rookies in strange and unsettling surroundings, the veterans in a changing game, the fringe players who will never make the big league and, of course, the player who is the greatest of his day.

There are also the team stories, the changes brought about by losing, winning, trades and firings.

The point is always that the stories never change whether the team is the 80-81 Oilers or the Montreal AAA of 1893. Nor is hockey all that different whether it is played in the NHL or in a community rink in Galt, Ontario.

While Gzowski's mystical-metaphysical descriptions of the swoop and glide of eternal infinite hockey are usually tiresome, the stories of the Oilers as a team and as individuals are the bulk and the strength of the book.

Particular stories are a must for any Oiler fan who wants to understand his team. Curt Brackenbury emerges as a man of character who is more important to the Oilers than most of the players who get regular ice time. Paul Coffey's unimpressive start and exceptional finish make sense as Gzowski chronicles his growing confidence.

There are also the stories of the great players of the game from Joe Malone to Bobby Orr, told mainly as foils to the story of Wayne Gretzky (although the story of

Don Murdoch could have been the story of Howie Morenz). Other side trips include sports medicine and psychology, the defection of Anton and Peter Stastny and Peter Pocklington's purchase of the Edmonton Trappers.

Gzowski's descriptions of his own hockey days glow with a boyhood innocence that is often reflected in his description of hockey today. Perhaps because few of us have grown up playing hockey every day after school, and living or dying with the home team, hockey is no longer the game of our lives as it is for him. But for most of us it is still our first game, and for its fans, particularly Oiler fans, *The Game of Our Lives* is a consistently entertaining book.

The band appearing this weekend in Dinwoodie is not, as was mentioned Tuesday in an ad and in *Up and Coming*, Dick Tracy. It is (ahem) Dick Twacy. Really!

Martha and the Muffins -  
This Is The Ice Age  
Dindisc VL 2228

Martha and the Muffins are a sad example of a band being pushed too far too quickly. When the Toronto group hit the UK charts with *Echo Beach* a couple of years ago, the media and fans in Britain latched on to the band, making them the Next Big Thing...for a while. The result was predictable. A second album was rushed through to follow up *Metro Music* (a great pop album), and suddenly Martha and the Muffins disappeared.

To their credit, they disappeared back to Canada, to make a new album in relative obscurity. Now, buoyed by a strong single, Martha and the Muffins are back, ready to take on the world again.

Unfortunately, the new album begins and ends at the single. "Women Around the World at Work" is great — an anthem you can dance to. Its clever combination of mindless pop and rilly serious social concepts shows rock 'n roll at its best.

That's about all there is to say about Ice Age, though. All that's good, anyway. At the top of the list of problems is the increasing presence of Mark Gane. Gane is a passable songwriter (he penned "Women", fer cryin' out loud) but as a vocalist he makes Dan Hill sound hyperactive. Without exception, Gane's vocals are dull and listless. It is as if he was afraid his vocal chords would shatter under any stress whatsoever.

Potentially effective tunes like "Swimming" are shot down by the hypnosis-inducing effect of Gane's intonations. In fact, a somnolent air pervades most of the album. I don't know how much, if any, of this ennui can be attributed to Martha Lady's departure (there were, you remember, two Marthas in the original band), but the two female lead singers definitely made Martha and the Muffins a different band. Now we're back to the same old post-wave drooping. *This is the Ice Age* leaves me cold.

Richard White -  
Down To Dreaming  
Tonic TON - 1

White is an Edmontonian who has joined the increasing ranks of those who have produced their own records. This first effort is a pretty good example of the kind of disc you like to listen to on dreary afternoons to be accompanied of a particularly pleasant brandy.

White is one of those intimate performers who invites you to journey with him into the innermost recesses of the human psyche. He tends to show a preoccupation with male-female relationships, both the kind that just aren't working despite the best of intentions, and the kind that work despite everything.

The songs on *Down to Dreaming* are all written by White, and I guess he bats about .500 this time. The songs that work are intimate without being embarrassing, and - give the man credit - they are obviously Canadian without being preachy about it. The songs that don't work fail for

the same reason that the first works of beginning playwrights often fail: it's just too hard to believe that people really think or act that way.

A tooth-grittin example of the latter is "Take Back Your Oilwells". There's

## ROUNDABOUT by Michael Skeet

nothing wrong with the sentiment; the provincial government *does* give short shrift to agriculture. But farmers seldom speak like poets; "You can take back your oil wells/They've cursed my precious soil" doesn't really portray bitterness. This is social protest run through a rose-coloured filter.

White's gentle voice is a handicap when dealing with the harsher aspects of human emotion. "Come To Alberta" is a vague sort of song about how nasty it really is that we've taken all that land away from the Indians - the sort of thing you hear talked of over bottles of Perrier. If what White feels is anger, then he has failed to get that across to us.

The good songs are like good people, though - I know I'm never going to get tired of hearing from them. Most of them fairly drip with that bittersweet nostalgia that makes people want to be poets: "In My Dreams Tonight", with its nice rhythmic pattern and francophone accordion, the memory-vignette that is South Ontario, and my favorite, "One Short Day". The latter is a lazy, jazzy tune that calls to mind exactly the kind of day White describes.

At the end of an album that's pretty serious even by folk music standards, Richard White has left us a small surprise. When I heard "I'm Not a Cowboy", I laughed until I cried. This is a perfect son of "Don't Fence Me In" - it even has that same loping, tongue-in-cheek rhythm. I sure hope this one was meant to be funny.

Mention should be made of the production, by Marc Vasey. Operating on somewhat of a shoestring budget, he and White decided to go for a live-in-studio recording to cut down on the amount of studio time needed. To save on the cost of renting a studio, the theatre in the Centennial Library was used. This budget recording has a much better than budget sound, and White may even make a profit. He's distributing the album himself, so I'll give you the address: Tonic Records, Box 9631, South Post Office, Edmonton T6E 5X3.

The bottom line: a pretty good album in the singer-songwriter field, but with obvious room for improvement.

Bee Gees  
Living Eyes  
RSO RX-1-3098

I'm no snob - I've got some good music by the Bee Gees in my collection which dates from the transition period of the early seventies, after pop and before disco - that period when the Gibbs were ex-

perimenting with R & B.

Now, however, it seems the Bee Gees would like to be making Relevant Music. It wasn't enough that they got everybody dancing with *Saturday Night Fever*; now they want everybody to think as well.

The only difficulty I have with this lofty aim is that the intellectual musings of Barry, Robin and Maurice Gibb carry all of the weight of a papier-mache boulder. The lads are living in Florida, of course, but the lyrics on this album are pure California:

## ARTS QUIZ



Match the work with the author:

1. *The Inequality of Man*
2. *Hunting Tigers Under Glass*
3. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*
4. *A Tale of a Tub*
5. *Varieties of Religious Experience*
6. *Youth*
7. *The Big Sleep*
8. *Uncle Vanua*
9. *Norma Jean the Termite Queen*
10. *The Case of Comrade Tulajev*

- a. Victor Serge
- b. Raymond Chandler
- c. Sheila Ballantyne
- d. Mordecai Richler
- e. Joseph Conrad
- f. Jonathan Swift
- g. H.J. Eysenck
- h. William James
- i. Nietzsche
- j. Anton Chekov

Answers: 1-f, 2-d, 3-a, 4-f, 5-g, 6-c, 7-b, 8-i, 9-c, 10-j

pap, crap and cosmic cliché.

There is some compelling music (the title track, for example), but for the most part the songs are weighted down by leaden string and synthesizer arrangements. In a couple of tunes (like the inept "Don't Fall in Love With Me"), the famous Bee Gee harmonies sound like they're coming from beneath a large pillow (somebody shoot the producer!). More than just voices are being smothered here, though. The Bee Gees used to have talent; are we going to have to put up with another disaster like this one to convince us that the brothers would be better off retired and living on the royalties from *Saturday Night Fever*?



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