

## Spirit plays with their audience

**Spirit of the West/ Jr. Gone Wild  
Dinwoodie  
Friday, November 18**

review by Ron Kuipers

It all started with "The Crawl," and right away the audience knew that they were in for a romping great time. And the good ol' boys from the North Shore did not disappoint the crowd that had been anticipating their arrival. The trio played *with* the audience, not just to them, creating an absolutely festive atmosphere.

Indeed, the atmosphere was hearty to a point where it became difficult to determine if the band fed off the fun the audience was having, or if the audience fed off the fun the band was having. No matter, a liberal dose of both was surely at work. The convulsive stage antics of guitarist John Mann had the audience reeling, while the constant interaction between Mann and flautist Geoffrey Kelly (who plays an array of other instruments) was equally entertaining. As Kelly prompted "let's dancel," they jiggled around the stage together, clearly enjoying themselves. The only drawback was that bassist Hugh Macmillan appeared left out of all the frivolity.

Amidst all the festivities, the night had some quirky moments. During "Room Without a View" Mann forgot some of the words, had to begin the song again, and when that didn't work he had to rely on the audience to help jog his memory. Mann's feathers were further ruffled when he was introducing the song "Take It From The Source," as someone shouted a nasty remark against the song's message. To that outburst Mann shouted back some obscenities and told the person to "grow up." This served to further impassion him, as he angrily dedicated the song to the would-be heckler.

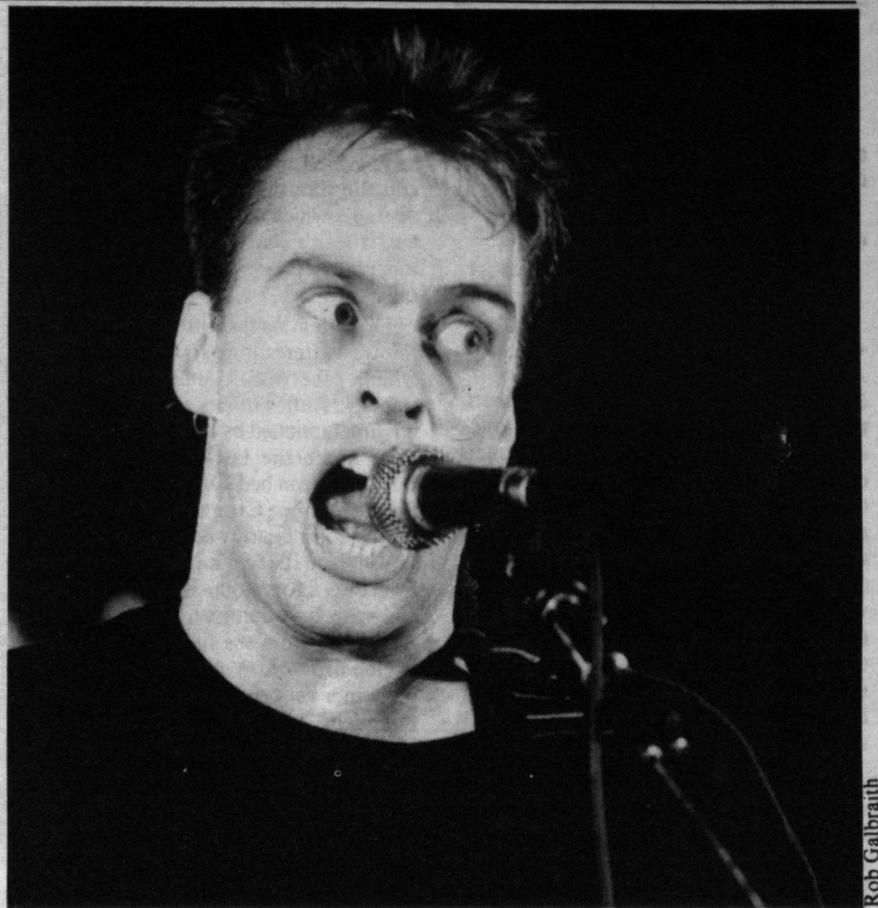
Unfortunately, with the election being so near, the band couldn't help sharing their political views with the audience, and perhaps they laid it on a little thick. One had to wonder if the Dinwoodie show was the right time or place for such talk. Yet the band has to be admired for the passion with which they approach their views, and it seems difficult, if not somehow wrong, for them to separate their ideology from their music. The crowd, however, was not a partisan one, as the mention of Ed Broadbent initiated a 50-50 chorus of yays and boos. Maybe Spirit of the West should have left a larger part of their politicking behind at the NDP rally the night before.

In spite of all the politics and quirky moments, it was apparent that the band

was having a fun time with this show. Described Kelly; "Edmonton is one of our favourite gigs, so we're just going to take our time and enjoy ourselves." The crowd was hopping around to sped-up versions of old favourites like "Honest Gamble" and "Our Station." The trio also performed every song off Labour Day save "Drinking Man." To this ensemble they added songs from their first recording, and some notable new songs. Among these was a stirring folk piece entitled "Not Just a Train," which they wrote for the sequel to the film *My American Cousin*. They also played around with a ditty composed of our national anthem, "This land is my land..." and some funny lyrics describing American attitudes towards Canada and Canadians.

Edmonton's Jr. Gone Wild opened the show with fervor. Their blend of country and rock combined with some local savvy to get the audience out of their seats. It was clear that this band has attained a certain amount of respect in Edmonton, and deservedly so. People actually listened to Jr. Gone Wild as a band, and not just an opening act.

But Spirit of the West still dominated, playing for more than two hours, which included two sets of music. When after these two sets they again came back on stage to play an encore, band member Geoffrey Kelly exuberantly announced, "Okay, this is the beginning of our third set!" They played into the wee hours of the morning, and still the audience showed no



Rob Galbraith

John Mann, vocalist and guitarist for Spirit of the West, at Dinwoodie Friday night.

signs of tiring.

The crowd's attempts to dam this river ultimately proved futile, as the lights finally came on with the audience still stomping

for more. In the end everyone had a positive, fun time, and Spirit of the West once again showed themselves capable of fostering a close bond with their audience.

## ESO, Dichter in fine benefit show at the Jube

review by Pat Hughes

The time of the Romantics was celebrated with impeccable grace on Friday in the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's special presentation, "Rhapsody on a Theme... The Romantic Era". Internationally renowned pianist Misha Dichter joined the ESO for what proved to be a memorable performance. The special fund raising effort began with the ESO concert, and was followed by a gala reception and art exhibition at the Mayfair Golf and Country Club. The reception was limited to those who were in for the full \$75 per person package, but thankfully the performance was open to all, for it was not a concert to be missed.

The music of Mozart greeted the audience in the first half of the program, the orchestra playing the "Haffner" Symphony No. 35 in D major and the Concerto for Piano No. 17 in G major. The bold, extremely popular "Haffner" symphony was nicely handled, its delightful themes

serving to whet the audience's collective appetite for the piano concerto which followed. Misha Dichter took the stage and dominated it with his skill and power. Dichter played beautifully, and at all times in full control of the sensitivity of the piece; his effort was well rewarded by the audience's enthusiastic applause.

As good as the Mozart was, however, the remainder of the program was to overshadow it. Fantasie, Opus 7, "The Rock" and Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini, Opus 43, both pieces by Sergei Rachmaninoff, provided a spectacular conclusion to the concert. "The Rock", an intricate, contrasting piece was startling in its beauty. Its frequent lilting phrases seemed to contradict the nature suggested by the work's title; it was however balanced by enough deep resonances to lend solidity to the overall effect.

The final work on the program was the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 43, a work composed of 24 variations on a

powerful theme. It was here that all of Dichter's skill and passion showed as he and the orchestra raced through the variations at breakneck speed. The emotion of the piece builds with each variation, reaching a dazzling peak in the eighteenth and moving on to close the work in an intense finale. Dichter's playing was simply amazing, his power and depth overwhelming the audience, which surged to its feet to reward the soloist with a mighty standing ovation.

The delighted crowd was not about to let Dichter get away without an encore, and he did not disappoint. Liszt's version of Berlioz' "Rakoczy March" is a whirling dervish of a piece, short, but intense and unbelievably fast. Dichter could do no wrong as he attacked the March, stunning the audience once again with an enormous display of talent. Dichter's performance was the perfect feature of the ESO's sparkling celebration of the Romantic Era, a concert to be remembered for quite some time to come.

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