

entertainment

Boomtown Rats: Expect the unsuspected

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The Boomtown Rats have always had a flair for the unusual.

To say their latest album *Mondo Bongo* continues that trend would indeed be an understatement.

This album is weird. However, it is not bad. To understand this, one must realize that band leader, lyricist, and songwriter, Bob Geldof, is an unusual man.

The Rats were formed in 1975. They soon served notice that they were, shall we say, an unorthodox group. They named an unusual dance after themselves and asked their fans to "Do the Rat."

Strange? Maybe, but not nearly as strange as their habit of presenting internal organs

as prizes in the dance competitions, presumably from rats.

Canada basically "discovered" The Boomtown Rats from the album *The Fine Art of Surfacing*. This album was certified platinum in Canada, besides doing well on the British Isles for the Ireland-based group. The biggest hit over here from this album was *I Don't Like Mondays*.

The son was, typically for Geldof, not typical. While in America on a promotional tour he saw the story of a San Diego school girl who explained the random homicides she committed in her school yard with a shrug and the phrase "I don't like Mondays," and that inspired him into penning the song. The song excluded all guitars; it just had Geldof's vocals, piano, and drums but it went gold in Canada.

The follow-up album *Mondo Bongo* is equally strange. There is a reggae undertone in a lot of the album, but especially in the cut "Banana Republic."

"Banana Republic" disobeys the reggae rule of consistent beat. Lead singer Geldof does not appear at the first, and this is in keeping with reggae; the bass, organ, and drums establish a beat for the vocalist. Then, Geldof comes in - and totally changes the tempo!

Still, it is a good song. One of its foremost virtues is ingenious vocals, compliments of Geldof. He makes several statements throughout the album; in this song, his topic is the "banana republics" of Central America, and the state of affairs in the "septic isles" where "everywhere I see the black and blue uniforms - police and priests."

Here and elsewhere, Geldof creates lyrics laden with clever plays on words and meaningful statements. The best example of the latter of the Rats' latest album is "Another Piece of Red" in which he comments upon the constant dissolution of the former British Empire, as "another piece of red left in my atlas today."

The Boomtown Rats are a musically-tight group. This certainly comes through on "Banana Republic," as well as on symbolism-rich "Go Man Go," the take off of "Under My Thumb" by Mick Jagger and



Keith Richard which Geldof renames "Under Their Thumb," and enthusiastic 60'ish style rockers, with Geldof's own adaptations, "Don't Talk To Me" "Hurt Hurts," and "Up All Night."

These cuts highlight and reveal the talent of, from time to time, Gary Roberts and Gerry Colt on guitars, Pete Briquette on bass, and Simon Crowe on drums. Of course, there is also the eccentric but talented keyboardist Johnnie Fingers (I love that name!) who always wears pyjamas - even on stage!

Geldof picks the opening slots on each side to spring on

the listener his strangest creations on the album - "Mood Mumbo" and "Please Don't Go." They are really unusual, especially the former. It is basically Geldof narrating strange, yet symbolic, lyrics while the rest of The Rats wreak musical havoc behind him, intentionally in a disjointed way. To say the least, it's an uncommon way to open up the album's first four minutes and seven seconds.

But then again, that's the Boomtown Rats. With Geldof and his gang, you come to expect the unexpected.

'Grapes of Wrath' plays at Tilley

The *Grapes of Wrath* remains one of the most important films of the Roosevelt era. Steinbeck's experiences working as a reporter in 1936 among the people from Oklahoma led to his writing of the novel on which this film is based. The "Okies" were forced to leave their eroded dust bowl farms. Many headed to California to work as migratory farm labourers.

Tom Joad and his family symbolize the hard-working and desperate people who moved to California for the grape harvests. The Joads live in a shanty town and suffer exploitation from the landowners along with their neighbours and fellow workers. An assertion of their dignity and relief from poverty is sought by means of a strike organized by Casey, an ex-preacher. Casey is murdered. Tom, in a futile attempt to save Casey, kills a deputy. He and his family are forced to move. This time they settle in a peaceful, well-organized government camp. Their contentment is soon disturbed by the police who are looking for Tom. Once again the family is uprooted. Their saga continues, with the film ending on an optimistic note.

The biting insights of the film are marred by its gross sentimentality. The fine camera work of Gregg Toland allows the raw material of the story to dominate and override the "pseudo-Biblical pore-people talk" and values. A documentary style of filming is utilized to present this sentimental but powerful commentary on the human experiences during the Depression years.

John Ford, a major figure in the American cinema has made over 125 films. A common theme in many of his films is that of a group of people facing death or difficult situations. There also is a criticism of but continued belief in the "American dream" expressed in much of his work. His characters often personify this moral complexity and make his films more than a simple story.

Sources: Lewis Jacobs. *The Movies as Medium*. 1970. Pauline Kael. *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. 1968 *New York Times Film Reviews 1939-1948*. 1970. Sadoul, Georges. *Dictionary of Films*. 1972.

The *Grapes of Wrath* will be playing at Tilley on Feb 5 and 6.

Doug and Slugs are hit makers

By DAVID MAZEROLLE
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On 1980's *Cognac and Bologna*, Doug and the Slugs showed they could become, as the record sleeve said, "Canada's newest hit makers." Two releases, "Drifting Away," and "Too Bad," were hits, the latter enjoying success in the U.S. On their latest effort, *Wrap It!*, the band currently has a hit with "Real Enough."

What is the secret of the Slugs' success?

1. Start with the music. Bright, bouncy tunes with sparkling musicianship and the occasional odd instrumentation are band trademarks. Listen to Rick Baker's strange guitar solo on *Wrong Kind of Right*, or the cocktail-lounge piano and swooning rhythm

guitar on *Embarassed (Just A Little Bit)* to get a taste of the sometimes novel arrangements.

2. Check out the lyrics. Doug Bennett is a writer of unusual style and originality and his lyrics are extremely clever. They are sometimes loony, as in *Wrong Kind of Right*, where he says, "Climb a telephone pole with a pail of pelican bait/Take a promissory note from the corpse at an Irish wake." Bennett occasionally becomes obscure, too, like in *Frankie*, where he tells Frankie that he has the "eyes and the ears and mind of this diplomat I imported from France."

3. Listen to the vocals. The scratchy-throated Bennett is a fine, expressive singer, who

can handle range of styles, from the crooning of *River and Partly from Pressure* to the uptempo rock of *Dangerous and Forget About Me*. He is complemented by back-up singers on two songs. The Nylons, a Vancouver-based group who sing without instrumental backing, help out on *Real Enough* and *Shawne Jackson and Colina Phillips* are heard on *Partly from Pressure*. (They can also be heard on *Bob and Doug MacKenzie's "Twelve Days of Christmas."*)

The catalyst in the above formula has to be Doug Bennett, the main creative force of the band. He has a fresh sense of humour, as evidenced on the hilarious liner notes, that give *Wrap It!* its party flavour. As Bennett himself says, "Grab it take it away!"