

## ARTS

## Montreal for jazz lovers

continued from the cover

The Anglo-Canadian contingent was represented by the Shuffle Demons, the Brian Hughes Group and Ramiro's Latin Orchestra (RLO) from Toronto; Queen's University Ontario from Kingston; Kathy Kidd's Afro-Latin Sextet and Fifth Avenue from Vancouver; Greg Lowe sextet from Winnipeg; and, Decidedly Jazz Dance-works from Calgary. All of the above shows were presented in outdoor venues, free to the public.

Another Can-Con angle was Les Finales Du Concours De Jazz Alcan, which took the form of five shows featuring finalists from across Canada: The Stephen Amiraault Group (East), John McLean Quartet (Atlantic), Barry Romberg Group (Center), Roy/Lerner Group (West) and Creatures of Habit (Pacific).

The Barry Romberg Group from Toronto included Romberg on drums and M. McCarron on guitar; both were affiliated with the York Jazz programme according to music professor Bob Witmer. Other Jazz programme alumnus, former students or associated concrete-construction lovers included D. Laws, trombone for RLO, and Underhill, Murley and Wynston from the venerable Shuffle Demons.

The Grand Poobah himself, YFS President Jean Ghomeshi, and Mike Ford from Glendon hit the Montreal streets for a little impromptu busking with their a cappella ensemble Moxi Fruvous. According to the Poobah, the group performed in both French and English.

This was their first trip to the Jazz festival, and, though they were not part of the official line-up, in the true spirit of Jazz, they set up shop wherever they could find an audience. If their success busking down at Harbour-front and providing musical satire for CBC-AM is any indication of their reception, Jean and the boys should have had a good time.

Of the seven bands I was able to see in the first two days of the festival, the most striking was Romero's Latin Orchestra. After raining all day, the evening was warm and moist, the clouds hung so low the atmosphere was very intimate.

After walking in on the final strains of a Mingus tune played by some band that could only be heard, not seen, due to the crowd which had formed around its spontaneous concert, I inadvertently ducked into a tent to come face to face with a Toronto band I had never even heard of. You should not have to drive to Montreal to discover music this good. Their mix of South American styles left no one standing still, and as the sounds spilled out of the tent, so did the dancing.

Other notables I had a chance to see were session blues man Robbin Ford, whose set fit perfectly with the low clouds and impending deluge; and, Dan Brubeck, son of Dave, who was merely perfect (perfect for guitar aficionados, but a little crisp and technical for the uninitiated). I think the lack of sound-warming acoustics, an endemic problem with outdoor concerts, detracted from Brubeck's enjoyable, but unmoving set.

Not having the \$25 to \$40 necessary to see the big names, I accepted my happy fate to wander past numerous bands and soloists who could not be identified in the programme, yet made the festival atmosphere. One band which I did identify, the Streetnix, took a shot at the title of Uncontrolled Jazz-Lunatics held by TO's Shuffle Demons.

This all-horn five-piece group, which has appeared at the last four festivals, turned out to be the unknown ensemble emitting the Mingus melodies at street level on the opening night. Their boisterous goodwill overwhelmed both their flaws and the accompaniment of a jack-hammer from a nearby construction site, and their ability to move competently from Monk to Was Not Was kept their stretch of pavement packed.

Some of the more "professional" outfits, such as the Yochk'o Seffer Quintet from

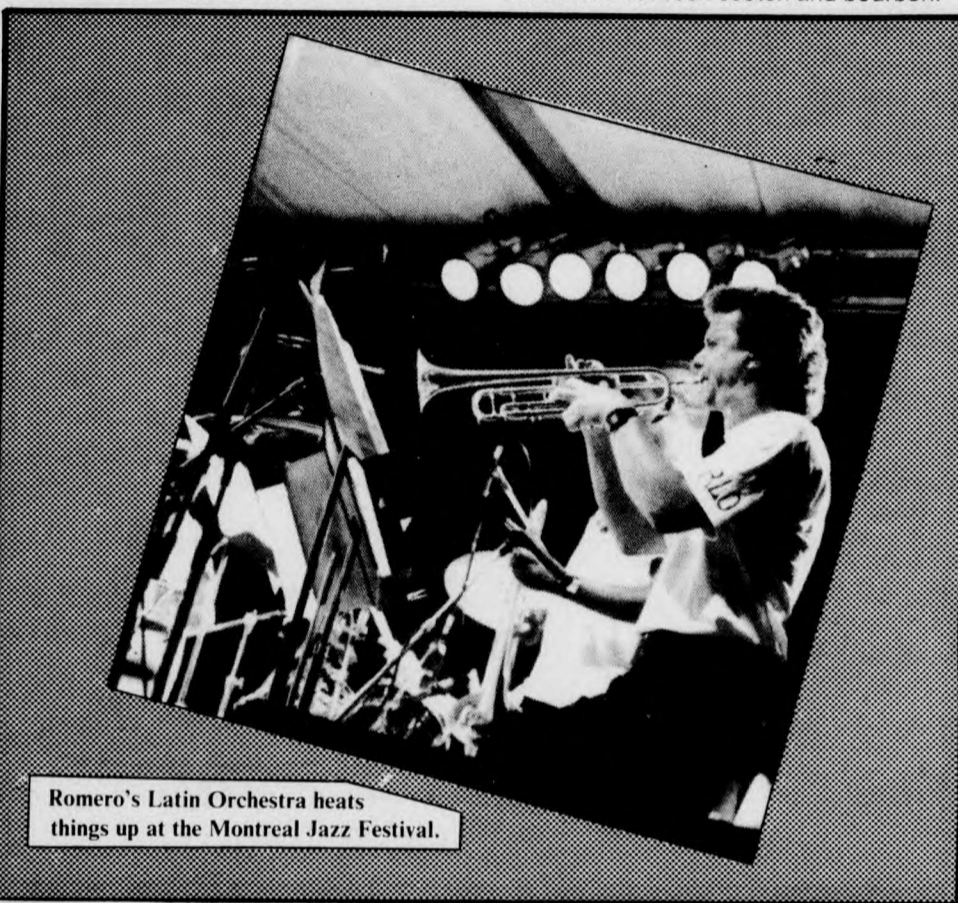
France (with Seffer's unique Selmer bass sax) were hurt by their own stature. Seffer's five piece band could not compete with the horrendous acoustics inflicted by staging his set in the atrium of a shopping complex. Bad move on the part of the organizers. A semi-competent band in an intimate environment is always more enjoyable than the best quintet playing in a glass mausoleum.

Arriving before the festival, I had a chance to see some Jazz in its natural habitat. The name of this habitat was 2080 Jazz, to be found around the corner from this year's festival at 2080 rue Clark. What you find there is something you'll never find in TO: a

quiet street, stairs leading down under a small neon sign, a dark, smoky basement with a bar in the corner and a stage that looks more like a sunken living room.

And, no cover.

The band, the Janis Stephans trio, played like true Jazz devotees in the thrall of the rhythm and wail. This is the stuff of movies: bassist with a grin of stupefaction and wonder at the sounds emanating from his fiddle, drummer hunched over his kit, a young but portly horn man who makes sure that the bar is within reach during bass solos and a bartender who cannot tell the difference between scotch and bourbon.



Romero's Latin Orchestra heats things up at the Montreal Jazz Festival.

Jason Nolan photo

## What really goes down at a rock concert . . .

by Paul Gazzola

June 29, CNE Stadium. To quote a friend of mine, this quadruple bill of heavy metal/rock bands is "a giant Wayne's World." The marquee reads Aerosmith and Metallica, Warrant and Black Crowes, but the Metallica T-shirts outnumber all the others.

It's not too surprising, really; the Toronto concert scene this past year has been a financial refuge for recovering or dying rock stars. Metallica, last seen here in April of 89, must seem like the long lost, rebellious brother who has finally returned home, and whose ID you can now use.

If Warrant had been first up instead of Black Crowes, my friend and I could have spent more time at the Budweiser Pit Stop that we found while looking for a hot dog stand. As it was, we still had enough time for a few Metallica and Aerosmith chants before making our way to the stadium.

So, what is it with Aerosmith? Why have all their opening acts of the past few years sounded like them? First, it was Guns n' Roses, now it's the Black Crowes. Is this the old soldier telling the new soldier that he's still bigger, badder and tougher? Or, does Aerosmith just like looking in the mirror?

The Black Crowes played with the kind of energy that only an open-

ing band, trying to be noticed, can exert. Regardless, they are still just the Stones or the Faces twenty years later. It wasn't enough to make us ignore the Budweisers in our bladders, and my friend and I made a pit stop of our own before the set was over.

These days, most rock bands wear their musical history on their sleeves. Tyler is Jagger, Perry is Page. From beginning to end, Aerosmith is a blues band.

Metallica was begotten of Sabbath in riffs and social commentary. Even those Aerosmith-Rolling Stones-wa-anabes, the Black Crowes, know what music they are ripping off.

Warrant's musical history is their hair. They've watched all the metal videos on MTV, so they know exactly when to bear their chests. Too bad they don't have any fangs.

We tried hard to miss Warrant. Right after the Black Crowes, we got into this huge hot dog line-up. By the time we got two dogs each (the lady gave us extra condiments and told us to put them in our pockets), Warrant had already started playing.

We ate slowly.

When we returned to the floor, they were half-way through "Heaven." Then, they played some new song that sounded like Motley Crue.

At the end of their set, the lead singer told the crowd to stick around, that "two of the best bands in the world" were still coming up. Of course we were going to stick around. Did he think everyone came to see him?

Metallica remains on the outside. Despite a Grammy nomination and an appearance two years ago and despite the band's progression from typical metal songs to an in-your-face social awareness, even the radio station presenting the band only play them late at

night, and only on the "Power Hour."

Let's face it: the rock of Toronto starts to crumble when faced with thrash bands like Metallica.

But, forget that Metallica is thrash metal, that they wanted to call their first album *Metal Up Your Ass!* Forget that singer/guitarist James Hetfield introduced "Master of Puppets" by having the crowd repeat after him words like shit, fuck, fag and cunt. Metallica was the most intelligent band on this bill, certainly in metal, possibly in rock.

Their last album, . . . *And Justice For All*, contained songs about the environment, war and the shortcomings of the American justice system. Thrown in were the usual teenage rebellion songs

On stage this night, Metallica is a power that doesn't preach; "just the facts," as Jack Webb would say. Hetfield hunches over his microphone like a howling Quasimodo — anything played in sixteenth notes is a slow song for this band.

So, what the hell are they doing on a bill with Warrant, with the Black Crowes, with Aerosmith? Metallica must have been wondering the same thing, 'coz they only played for an hour.

The Equal Rights Amendment ceases to be in effect at heavy metal concerts; the only feminist statement being made by the women there is whether they're wearing tight pants or a tight skirt. Everyone shows cleavage, whether they have any or not.

"As long as I have a face," Steve Tyler tells the ladies in the front row, "you'll have a place to sit."

Joe Perry, finishing off a beautifully played blues standard, which also featured his only lead vocal of the night, told the crowd his baby doesn't want him no more. But, he continued, maybe some nice Toronto girl would be backstage later, prompting a girl to offer herself with a loud, "Me!"

