

# Cabaret expecting more ups than downs

**Brian Mitchell**  
"Life is a Cabaret!" For York Cabaret Productions members, that familiar line is more than just a reminder of Liza Minnelli and Bob Fosse, it's a prophetic declaration. A York Cabaret, like life, most definitely has both its ups and downs.

"It can be a lot of fun," says Rob Berry, this year's Artistic Director of York Cabaret, "and it provides a dynamic learning experience. Students--from any faculty--are given as opportunity to submit, direct and perform their own original material. Cabaret is such a

wide-open format, it gives everybody a chance to produce." Berry is convinced that the Cabaret is an important and vitalizing enterprise, but he is also quick to point out that, in his position, there can be a lot of problems.

"Ten or twelve years ago, when Cabaret first started," he says, "it was very heavily funded by the (Theatre) department. Now we just get a straight \$600 for the year that has to be divided between all the shows." Although he does get help from individual colleges (Vanier, for example, paid for the first production), Berry usually finds

himself "scrounging." And not just for money. Often it's for such basics as working equipment. "The Theatre department gives us their garbage," he jokes.

Despite the difficulties, however, Berry says the 82-83 season "is shaping up to be one of the best York has seen." Six productions have been scheduled throughout the year and these will be held at various campus locations. "It depends on a lot of things as to where each one is held," he says. "It depends on the sort of facilities that are available, the kind of space the show requires, and

sometimes we use a particular college just because it's the home of the author." Most of the productions this year will be licensed by the L.L.B.O.--"mostly to make money," Berry admits.

The next scheduled Cabaret, by Peter Webster called *Smash Pumpkin*, will open Oct. 28 and promises to be a "Theatre

Extravaganza". A Cabaret by Brett Abbey billed as a "Dance Extraganza" will follow running from Nov. 7 to 12.

Anyone wanting to contact Rob Berry can do so by dropping a note in the Cabaret box on the second floor of the Administrative Studies building, or by phoning the Theatre Department.

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## EXTRACKS

### Nebraska: Bruce Springsteen

**Robert Koch**

It is a long way from Asbury Park to Nebraska, and similarly it is a "long dark highway" which connects the world of Springsteen's early recordings to the world of *Nebraska*. There is no more summer music for Springsteen: no odes to singing junkmen at dawn, no raucous celebrations of desire ("Rosalita"). His music is now somber and obsessive, and detractors claim that Springsteen is doomed to endlessly repeat himself, that he is as trapped as the characters he depicts.

But Springsteen is older--and younger--than any of the perspectives in his songs. On *Nebraska*, he tells his stories with the indifferent sympathy peculiar to the folk spirit, allowing himself a range of expression veering from populist social realism to a darker, more mythic fatalism. The stories themselves deal with America's heartland, and the violence embodied therein. They tell of law and disorder, of corruption and envy, of unatoned sins and familial bonds. Mostly they tell of a "meanness in the world" that is at once personal, political, and universal. Here desperate players call for deliverance from "nowhere", here "everything dies"--perhaps one day to come back (the only sign of hope on the album, and an ambiguous one at that).

The action is played out in an ominous landscape of bleak horizons: refinery towers, silent factory towns, black rivers and turnpikes. Recorded on a 4-track home cassette, the sound evokes Johnny Cash, Presley's Sun-sessions, perhaps Dylan's *Basement Tapes*. Springsteen's vocals have never been better--mournful, subtle, punctuated by ghostly whoops and howls.

No doubt *Nebraska* will find little favour beside the fashionable decadence and cheap romanticism offered up by contemporary electro-pop in its various everchanging mutations. But the escapism of parody--really the only form such styles ever achieve--is of course the necessary complement to the mood or worldview Springsteen explores on *Nebraska*. More and more he is establishing himself as an essential voice in the American experience of the last years of this beleaguered and dying century.

### Tradition in Transition: Chico Freeman

**Steven Hacker**

Chico Freeman, the young tenor saxophonist whose star has steadily rising over the past few years, is starting to disappoint me, along with all the others who thought he was destined to make it to the top of the heap. Not just the top in terms of sales or popularity, but in terms of the strong influence he could have on others. Some thought he was going to be the player from the second generation of avant-garde jazzmen to really bring public attention to that form.

Freeman's innovative period appears to be on hold and his last few albums have pushed him further and further into the mainstream, where, judging from this latest release he seems quite comfortable.

That doesn't mean to say that this is a bad record or that it's totally commercial: it's just that it doesn't seem to satisfy Freeman's immense creative potential. One indication is the length of the songs. There are nine compositions relatively squeezed in, with only a few of them allowing much soloing space. The songs themselves have a lot in common with those of so many '60's Blue Note sessions. Freeman's sidemen are all capable, but no one seems to be exerting themselves.

*Tradition in Transition* is the album title Freeman chose. It refers to the continuous transition of his music. One can only hope that his next stage is more satisfying than this one.



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