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**THE
CANADIAN
ARMED FORCES**

MUSIC
Concerts

Sister Anne
The Grad Lounge, Oct. 5

by David Ackerman

Toronto's new indie band Sister Anne is in the heart of its adolescence; while no one can deny the talent which the musicians display, their performance and presentation still need a lot of work. Last Monday, Sister Anne played the Grad Lounge, as part of the pub's new Tuesday night live music series.

Despite playing together for only seven months, the threesome of Kate Ashley (guitar and vocals), Corinne Culbertson (bass and vocals), and Joel Wasson (drums) have begun to develop a sound that may indeed separate them from the rest of the Toronto indie scene.

Although the show was entertaining, realistically they are not yet a great live band. Both Culbertson and Ashley are inexperienced as front men and lack the stage presence that is so important to a band's image. Ashley and Culbertson may be somewhat uncomfortable on stage but their combined vocals and rhythmic sense give Sister Anne a wonderfully refreshing sound.

Ashley's professional music career began quite differently than the usual punk-influenced rebel. In fact, contrary to a punker's "strong artistic integrity," Ashley was "selling out" writing commercial tunes to pay the bills.

Ashley first met Culbertson in High School and after meeting up again some three years later, they decided to write together. At that time, they still needed a drummer, so Culbertson, who was playing with the band Big Daddy Cumbuckets, drafted their drummer, Joel Wasson.

While Sister Anne performance was fair, the meaningless banter between songs drew out the show. In most cases, such exchanges with the audience are boring, confused and self-indulgent. If Sister Anne had stuck strictly with their material, everyone would have been better off.

Tom Waits
Massey Hall, Oct. 6

by Susan Wengle

In his song "Whistlin' Past The Graveyard," Tom Waits describes his entrance into the world: "Born in a taxi cab I'm never comin' home." The lyric is indicative of his musical career, for he has never stopped travelling or growing.

Unknown to many, this low-key character has been cutting albums since 1973 - a substantial repertoire of eleven. He has amassed a respectable following, filling three houses last week at Toronto's Massey Hall, where he launched his ongoing world tour.

You definitely won't find Waits on the charts but, if you look closely, you may see him in the movies. He wrote the soundtrack to Coppola's under-rated *One From the Heart* and performs with Crystal Gayle (of all people) on the album. His bit parts in *Cotton Club* and *Rumblefish* and leading role in Jim Jarmusch's *Down By Law* project his unselfconscious character and his comfort on screen. Waits just finished filming *Ironweed* in which he plays opposite Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep. Finally, Waits has recently closed the one-man opera, *Frank's Wild Years*, at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Waits is a tragic-comic hobo with unmatched integrity for he is unwilling to compromise his message or sound into a marketable, candy-coated, chart-topper. Acknowledging a harsh reality interwoven with dreams of something better (reminiscent of Chaplin's Tramp),



NOW THAT'S ALTERNATIVE: Toronto indie band Sister Anne played last Tuesday night at the Grade Lounge.

Waits aims for the heart of the common person's lot.

This prolific songwriter not only has a knack for turning phrases, but over the course of his first seven albums (from *Closing Time* in 1973 to *Heartattack and Vine* in 1980), one can trace the development of his characters. Through nocturnal images, as in *Nighthawks At The Diner's* "graveyard charade, a late-shift masquerade," Waits studies the dark, often tragic side of people, never forgetting to bring us around with sparkling comic touches.

It would be difficult to classify all of Waits music in one category. His first albums have a slight country influence, "01" "55" later recorded by the Eagles. He quickly assumed a blues-jazz accent, performing with a basic jazz band: piano, sax, trombone, bass and drums. Among all his albums, Waits spins the most heart-wrenching ballads. "Tom Traubert's Blues" on *Small Change* is a contemporary "Waltzing Matilda," while "I Wish I Was In New Orleans (In The Ninth Ward)," is not unlike early Randy Newman thick with emotion and bourbon. "Don't have a drinking problem 'cept when I can't get a drink," bellows Waits in "Bad Liver And A Broken Heart."

Waits' most recent three albums mark a distinct break from his early work. He begins to experiment much more with sound on *Swordfishtrombones*, using metal auglons, bag pipes, marimbas and various drums, including an African talking drum. The effect is to create an underworld nightmarish atmosphere which is at first listen, disturbing, and which becomes too haunting to be dismissed casually.

Rain Dogs is perhaps the most accessible album of the three, although it too does not lend itself to easy assimilation.

Frank's Wild Years, Waits' most recent effort, depicts the rise and fall of an American Hero. We first hear of Frank in the song "Frank's Wild Years" on *Swordfishtrombones*. Frank is a stagnating lower-middle class married man who, in a drunken revelry one night, decides to douse his two-bedroom flat in the Valley with gasoline and watch it go up in flames. His last thought, as he heads north on the Hollywood Freeway: "Never could stand that dog."

Although Waits integrated some of his earlier works into last week's performance, the focus was on

Frank's Wild Years. The stage was set with a black and red checkerboard floor and large coloured polygon lights, suggesting a child's playroom. Accordion music piped through the Hall's ancient sound system created a Vaudeville atmosphere. Before the band's entrance, a tape was placed in an old player piano which then crackled with the tinny sounds of "A Bicycle Built For Two." This was more than child's play.

Waits entered in the dark and cracked the silence wide open with a thumping, passionate "Straight To The Top." The coloured blocks reflected red light on the band and, with the heavy beat of the music, suggested a tribal ritual or hell fire.

Waits assumed the role of preacher for what he called a "religious number." His rasping voice scats the words "you gotta help me keep the devil Way Down In The Hole" and the narrative begins to take shape. On stage, Frank finds the ladder he dreamed of climbing quite short and leading nowhere.

Waits changed his jacket from black to white for the reprise of "Straight To The Top"—the Vegas or Jerry Lewis version—which he concluded with convulsive coughing. The dissipated Frank is disillusioned and sickened by the realization of his American Dream.

Later, Waits introduced the band with Vegas-like bravado: "Aren't they fabulous?" There is no doubt they were. All five members of the ensemble were proficient with a number of instruments I had trouble recognizing, let alone pronouncing.

Waits then sat down at the old player piano, grabbed a beer from a nearby blue refrigerator and displayed his dexterity with a complicated number nobody in the audience had ever heard. Waits stopped suddenly, "You can join in anytime" and continued, then stopped again: "Come on, they knew it last night." All kidding aside, Waits stilled the audience with what he called "a Christmas favourite," "Christmas Card From A Hooker In Minneapolis." As in his music, onstage Waits cloaks his sensitive insight, concerning human nature and the hardships of man in a keen sense of humour.

Waits was an animated and mesmerizing presence on stage. His slight build, thick shock of hair and ability in the art of mime again recalled a Chaplinesque character, capable of evoking both humour and pity.

CHRY-FM 10 MOST PLAYED RECORDINGS

ARTIST	TITLE	LABEL	WKS.
C Various	<i>It Came From Canada (Vol. 3)</i>	OG	5
C Rheostatics	<i>Greatest Hits</i>	X Records	1
Dead Kennedys	<i>Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death</i>	Fringe	7
Eric B. & Rakim	<i>Paid in Full</i>	4th & Broadway	4
Various	<i>Lonely Is an Eyesore</i>	Polygram	2
Panther Burns	<i>Behind The Magnolia Curtain</i>	Rough Trade	3
Various	<i>I Was A Teenage Zombie</i>	Enigma	6
Tom Waits	<i>Frank's Wild Years</i>	Island/MCA	7
Third World	<i>Hold On To Love</i>	CBS	2
R.E.M.	<i>Document</i>	IRS/MCA	2

This chart is determined by the actual number of plays the material received between the period October 4 to October 13, 1987. Compiled by the Programming Department. C denotes Canadian artist(s).

