

Artsweek

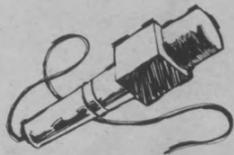
The Arts and Entertainment Supplement to the Daily Nexus, for October 20th through October 26th, 1994



Thanks, Quentin! Also inside is an interview with pop wizard Grant McLennan on 2A, a report from the "All Virgos are Mad" concerts on 4A, and MORE!

I'm Quentin Tarantino, and my new film PULP FICTION is reviewed inside, on page 7A. Over there is my friend Tim Burton. His new film is called ED WOOD and it's also reviewed on 7A.

RAGLAND



ROCK 'N' ROLL FRIEND

Interview by Kevin Carhart

Mellow, complex, versatile, pretty, intense, literate, romantic, ambitious. Of the pop songwriters who satisfy these descriptions, none stands out more than Grant McLennan. As part of the Go-Betweens from 1978 until 1990, and through distinguished solo releases since, McLennan has revealed his songwriting genius to be unrivalled by anyone, with the possible exception of his former Go-Betweens partner, Robert Forster.

Critically acclaimed and commercially unsuccessful, the Go-Betweens are crucial to any widespread investigation of discerning popular music, along the lines of XTC, Kate Bush or R.E.M. Every year or so, we get a treat in the roughly simultaneous issue of both McLennan's and Forster's new albums, an ironic way for their label Beggars Banquet to release the two artists now that they have split. The latest batch consists of McLennan's new album, "Horse Breaker Star," and Forster's album of cover versions, "I Had a New York Girlfriend." *Arts-week* recently had a chance to speak with McLennan by phone when he was in New York. What follows is an edited transcript.

AW: You're about to have a new record out. How would you characterize what's happening on it?

GWM: Well, it's a record recorded in Athens, Georgia. It's 24 songs; it's the biggest and boldest and warmest and loveliest thing I've done, I think. I like it as much as "16 Lovers Lane" and "Before Hollywood," so that's kind of where I see it. And it's just kind of a bunch of songs about footsteps, and change, and dirt roads, underneath a sky full of stars. It's called "Horse Breaker Star."

AW: Is there anything in particular behind that title?

GWM: It's just a constellation that I invented. Basically, I imagined my own bunch of stars ... it came to me as horse breaker star. So I hope all the people on the record were going down that road as well, you know? It'd be great. It's a peaceful place; it's a good place.

AW: You know, it surprises me that more songwriters don't bother to use images and things to

signify, they don't put them in their lyrics, while you and Robert Forster have millions, and they're so powerful ... Why do you think more people don't bother?

GWM: Well ... they're different. Also they don't care ... I think they're more interested in, maybe a smaller thing, I don't know. Robert would say they're just not good songwriters.

AW: You and the Go-Betweens never directly wrote about politics or social relevance ...

GWM: No ... I think I'm better at doing what I do. There's other people who feel the need to do that and they can do it better than I can. I'm interested in the more interior kind of monologue. I'm interested in little details, in the way I react to the world, and I think in a way that's political as well. The people in

the songs from the concert you and Robert did opening for Lloyd Cole, and when your two harmonies were doing "Baby Stones" [a Robert Forster solo song] or "Haven't I Been a Fool" [a Grant McLennan solo song] ... it was just incredible.

GWM: Oh right ... yeah, I really like the arrangement we did for "Baby Stones." And it's nice, "Haven't I Been a Fool" and "Baby Stones" would really fit into the Go-Betweens kind of thing. It was a pleasure having Robert sing on it, and vice versa, I guess.

AW: It's kind of something to wonder about, what the both of you would sound like on stuff recorded solo since 1990 ... When you were together, what was the collaborative process like?

GWM: It was mainly,

was collaborative in that first stage where I'd suggest something, and Robert'd suggest something, and we'd kind of get a bunch of songs together, and then take them to the band. There were a few things where we actually sat down and wrote



together, but it was mainly, I'd write something and Robert would write something and then we'd come together on it.

AW: The new record will be on Atlantic Records. Are you looking forward to being on that label?

GWM: It's great. I've always wanted to be on the label Roberta Flack is on ... and the Liz Phair record coming out, the Lemonheads, there's some really good stuff on Atlantic.

AW: Do you think large audiences, mass culture, is incompatible with something so ...

GWM: It probably is, but people's ears ... they're more open these days. Something like R.E.M., "Out of Time" is a very intimate, a very individual record. It often comes down to luck, and, it's possible, I certainly think the odds are more in favor of a more immediately grabable music, like in film, like in TV.

AW: I heard a rumor that you were working on a screenplay.

GWM: Yeah, Robert and I are writing a screenplay for a kind of modern comedy, and it's going really well, and we hope to finish it over our summer ... We're very excited about it and we're kind of cracking ourselves up with jokes ...

AW: Do you have any plans to work on songs together?

GWM: Well, we've done some recording together, but that's for us.

Obviously, the temptation would be when the film is done ... We'd know the songs, so it might be we could do something for that, but you know, at the moment there's no studio time booked.

AW: Since you do get into imagery, into specific things, while so much music that I find kind of disappointing sticks with the elemental ... I wonder if there are any things behind some of the songs that would be interesting to elaborate, or would

AW: That reminds me, I have a friend who was defending Led Zeppelin as the best, the most original, the most versatile, and I was using the Go-Betweens as my rebuttal ... Sometimes it seems that people with a supremacy for classic rock just don't look to today; they don't believe anything's been written after ...

GWM: Some people think that, but I disagree with that. While the form might be familiar, there's always great people who're going to come up and make it their own; so to think that nothing's been written post-1956 or 1966 is really depressing and shows a really narrow mind and lack of imagination.

AW: Do you think it's cyclical that, say, the Beatles or Bob Dylan were once popular, and now such wonderful stuff is still around but it's relatively unpopular?

GWM: Well ... also times have changed. The world's now definitely a less naive world. The reason Dylan and the Beatles and Presley were so monumental at the time was because it was a lot more innocent, and because of the power of that; consequently, now it's harder for some people to do things, 'cause Presley and Little Richard and the Beatles ... have done it, but there's fantastic things around at the moment. And who knows, in 20 years time, people may be asking about Luscious Jackson or something.

AW: Who are some of your favorites these days?

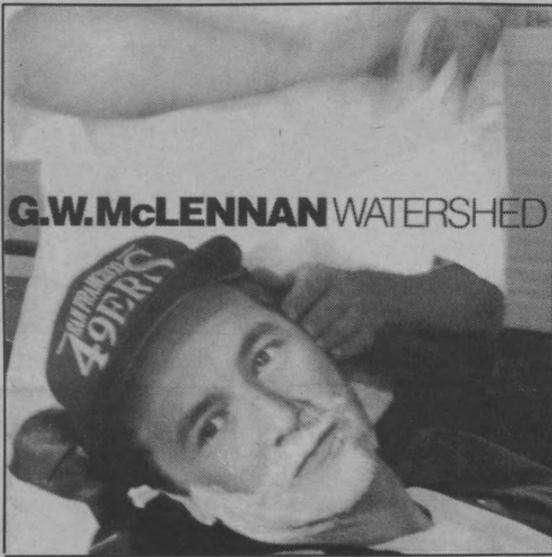
GWM: I like Teenage Fanclub, I like James, that album "Laid," I like Kate Bush's new album, I like Luscious Jackson, I really liked Nirvana's records.

AW: Anything particular coming out of Australia?

GWM: Yeah, me ... [laughter] me and Robert ... Ed Kuepper's always been good ... and there's a very good band called Magic Dirt.

AW: Who are your musicians these days?

GWM: Well, the people on "Horse Breaker Star" were kind of local Athens players, mainly jazz players, the drummer and bass player were, and Syd Straw, she sang a lot of the



our songs and the way they react, I think it's very clear what their politics are. I just don't feel I've got any goddamn answers, so I don't think it'd come across terribly successfully.

AW: I've heard that you just played with Robert in England.

GWM: Yeah, we were both in London for different reasons, and we were asked if we'd like to do something, and it seemed like a great thing to do, so we just did a bunch of Go-Betweens songs, and we recorded it on to ADAT. Hopefully if he and I like it ... The show was just magnificent, so the omens are good that it should be worthwhile releasing ... But neither Robert nor I have listened to it yet.

AW: I heard some of

before we'd take the songs to the band, we'd sit down and kind of go through them and work out what we wanted to do, and then we'd take them to the band and sometimes they'd change, which is what good bands should do.

If the songs need changes, you've got to stay open, and other times what we'd come up with, we'd all just naturally drop into it. It was mainly a period of going through the songs, and then the second process was rehearsing with the band, and then the third process was undoing all the good work up with the recording [chuckles].

AW: Were the individual songs written by one or the other of you?

GWM: In most cases, yeah. There was always, it

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DISCOGRAPHY

THE GO-BETWEENS:

- SEND ME A LULLABYE (1982)
- BEFORE HOLLYWOOD (1983)
- SPRING HILL FAIR (1984)
- LIBERTY BELLE AND THE BLACK DIAMOND EXPRESS (1986)
- TALLULAH (1987)
- 16 LOVERS LANE (1988)

GRANT McLENNAN:

- WATERSHED (1991)
- JACK FROST (1991)
- (WITH STEVE KILBEY)
- FIREBOY (1993)
- HORSE BREAKER STAR (1994)

ROBERT FORSTER:

- DANGER IN THE PAST (1990)
- CALLING FROM A COUNTRY PHONE (1991)
- I HAD A NEW YORK GIRLFRIEND (1994)

YOU'LL LAUGH SO HARD...

Hey kids, do you like to laugh? What do you say to gut-wrenching, hilarious, nonstop jokes 'til your two-drink minimum comes out your nose?

Well, Richard Jeni, who won the award for Best Male Stand-Up Comic of 1993 at the American Comedy Awards, will be showing his New York face at the Ventura Concert Theatre Saturday, Oct. 22. Tickets are still available for \$15.

Seen by millions this summer in the wacky, surreal comedy "The Mask," Jeni portrayed Jim Carrey's best friend Charlie. As you may remember, Charlie was the one-liner, dance-clubbing smart ass who guides Carrey's character.

Having worked his ass off since 1982 in comedy clubs, and laughing his way to HBO and Show-time specials, Jeni's brand of comedy is finally being appreciated by more Americans.

Jeni has now joined some of his peers in selling out their comedy for a weekly TV show called "Platypusman." The premise of the show is that a cable cooking program for single men becomes a bachelor's guide to dating and urban living.

Some of Jeni's funniest moments are about sex. "Why do they call it porno-

graphy?" he quips. "They should call it 'stuff that never happens to you ever, starring women you will never be with.'"

The material will also be about animals, marriage, cars, health food, violence and restaurants. "I love it when guys first walk into the Red Lobster saying, 'It seems so cruel, boiling a lobster.' Three beers later, he's the Emperor of Rome: 'Bring me the brown one, he amuses me ... the one there, near the glass. Seize

him! Quickly! The table next to me is a bit noisy — boil them as well!"

If you have the money and time and some extra bodily fluids (you'll laugh so hard you may lose some), make the 35-minute trip out to Ventura. I'll see you there with my floor mat, for when I fall out of my seat.

For more information, please call the Ventura Theatre Box Office at 648-1888.

—Michael Cadilli



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What's Cooking?

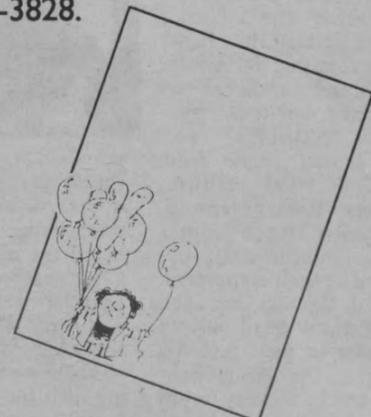
You'll find out in the *Weekend Connection*, in Friday's Daily Nexus!

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MENACE AND BEAUTY COULD BE FOUND IN THE "ALL VIRGOS ARE MA

I made it into west Hollywood by ten of seven, and thought for sure there would already be a huge line of people waiting outside the Troubadour for the evening show. I thought I'd see black-clad Hollywood youth with sprayed hair, black-polished fingernails and lipsticked mouths. This was, after all, "All Virgos Are Mad," 4AD Records' week-long festival of artists, both old and new.

To those of us who "discovered" 4AD in the mid- or early '80s, it was home to many gothic-inspired bands, like Dead Can Dance, Cocteau Twins, The Wolfgang Press, Clan of Xymox, and even early Bauhaus and Modern English. Most of these bands, though, have always seemed to be slightly outside the "gothic" genre, drawing diverse crowds of both younger and older fans with differing tastes in music.

When I finally made it to the club, there was a line of maybe eight or nine people outside. I stood next to a young Asian woman who was wearing a flower dress. "Who are you here to see?" she asked me. "I want to see the Red House Painters."

Despite the fact that I had never seen the House Painters live and was looking forward to experiencing what they would do with their stately songs of love and loss, I was really there to see The Wolfgang Press. Having seen them play live at the now-defunct Anaconda Theater during the summer of 1992, I knew how they could rock the house.

And rock the house they did! It was a great set at the Troubadour, with a lot of new material thrown in from "Funky Little Demons," due in January '95. There were a few more mellow and lighthearted songs — at least compared to early releases like "Standing Up Straight" and "The Birdwood Cage." But TWP's frontman, Mick Allen, certainly does know how to dominate a stage, with plenty of help from longtime guitarist and soundsmith Andrew Gray. The only person who could upstage Mick was the "secret, special guest" the Press brought on stage for their encore. That person was none other than Tom Jones, for whom The Wolfgang Press has written a song. Tom launched into that one with natural finesse, and in mere minutes had the audience eating out of his hand. Mick returned to the stage and both he and Tom performed a fabulous rendition of "A Girl Like You," the smash single from TWP's 1991 album, "Queer." It was cavernous.

The Red House Painters were, unfortunately, upstaged by their equipment. Due to the fact that each band was allotted only 40 minutes to play, and the crew at the Troubadour was trying to keep setup times between the bands to a limit, not everything could be soundchecked to

efficiency. I suspect the House Painters could put on an amazing show — as evidenced by the hushed majesty of "Red House Painters," or their soul-searching, bare-bones



demo debut, "Down Colorful Hill." Some of that was in evidence at the Troubadour, but the equipment failure kept frontman Mark Kozelek in an acerbic mood (at least, more than usual), and a few of the songs had a little trouble getting off the ground. By "Medicine Bottle," the House Painters had hit their stride, and they began to shape an atmosphere of both bleakness and beauty the way only they can.

Until such time, anyway, as some drunken wit in the audience shouted an obscenity at Mark during a very moving part of the song, and Mark abruptly stopped the music. "What's your problem?"

"The only person who could upstage Mick was the 'secret, special guest' ... Tom Jones..."

he inquired angrily, as audience members shouted for the guy to get out of the club. "You think I'm a skinny shit," Mark fumed as the band started up again, "but I'll beat the crap out of you." The audience cheered and applauded, and the band got down to making music again. If only such support were shown to all intense, lonely guys with a penchant for writing personal, self-centered lyrics.

Well, if the Hollywood goths didn't come out for



the first show, I figured they'd be out for the second show at the Troubadour, especially if they'd heard the night's "special guest" was to be core Dead Can Dance member, Brendan Perry. Also on the bill was 4AD's strangest band, His Name is Alive, masterminded by Warren Defever. Warren was actually playing emcee during the festival, introducing each

band with dubious statements like "This next band ... we grew up with them in Livonia, Michigan. We used to do kid stuff together, and it was great."

Brendan Perry, who is not Warren's age, and actually hails from Ireland by way of England, put on a performance to behold. Gone was the shoulder-length hair and Shakespearean goatee. He wore a cotton shirt and blue jeans, and his speaking voice was lighter and not nearly as resonant as his singing voice. After each song, he would give a shy smile and nod briefly to the audience. For all his talent, Perry is an unassuming man. He didn't exude greatness; he simply was.

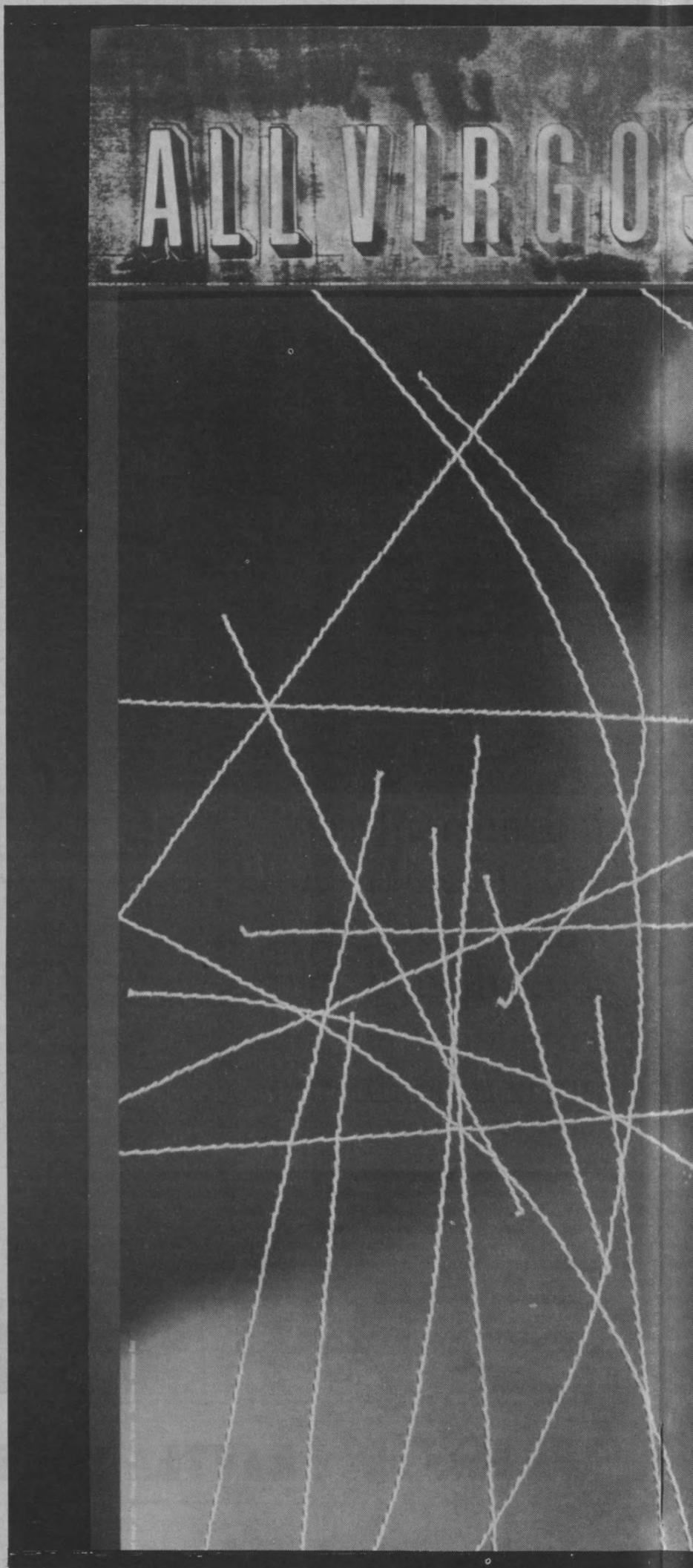
He performed some songs from his forthcoming solo album by Dead Can Dance. He also did a few Tim Buckley covers, including a version of "I Must Have Been Blind," which has been covered by the 4AD collective band This Mortal Coil on their well-known 1986 album "Filigree and Shadow."

If His Name is Alive did not necessarily have Brendan Perry's aura of brilliance, at least they were inspired. A mere 40 minutes is not enough time to

let them expand in a live setting. Warren Defever and crew like to take short little songs such as the recent "Baby Fish Mouth," and turn them into longer, more experimental versions, with the core of the same song at its heart. While vocalist Karin Oliver's demure stage presence and achingly pure vocals keep the audience entranced, Defever is the one to watch. He is never still for long, flailing about his corner of the stage, screaming into his guitar, introducing His Name is Alive, saying, "This next band came all the way from Australia..."

They ended up with some acoustic songs, and Karin did an a cappella version of "The Taxi Ride," by Jane Siberry. Apparently she and Warren have been working on an HNIA album of all cover songs. Karin has been recording a cappella versions of the songs, and then giving them to Warren to sample, loop and splice in all sorts of strange ways. I don't know if this is what their next album will sound like, but who can say? It's up to Warren's whim.

And then the Pale Saints took the stage.



What struck me most was their professionalism. They have developed a stronger live performance from the last time I saw them. They are less reliant on samplers and technical equipment than on guitars and good songs. The Pale Saints rocked out — even during "Henry," the fabulous 10-minute song from their new album, "Slow Buildings." Meriel Barham's voice was at times too serene, but she projected a savvy stage presence that didn't sacrifice enthusiasm.

The band was quite

happy to play for an appreciative audience, unlike some of their experiences at home in England. The clincher was their rendition of "Sight of You," a song from the Pale Saints' debut album, penned by Ian Masters, their departed original vocalist. This time around it was sung by Ian's replacement, new bassist Colleen Browne. Instead of the epic proportions the song once had, it's now become yet another good pop song in the Pale Saints' repertoire. It was great to see them live, but I did miss

Ian Masters' decided loopiness.

In fact, I ran into Ian while hanging about the Troubadour after the show — there was the occasional rock star at the bar, between the college kids and late-twenty-year-olds. I noticed Ian standing against the bar as the crowd filed passed, and I asked him what he thought of the show. "Well, she got the words wrong," he said of Colleen's version of "Sight of You." I hadn't noticed any lyrical slip-ups. "They're just nonsense lyrics any-

"VIRGOS ARE MAD" CONCERT SERIES IN LOS ANGELES. A WEEK'S EXPERIENCES, BY MIZ E.



way," was his reply.

Apparently, Ian Masters and His Name is Alive's Warren Defever have been working on an album together. It's supposedly completed and waiting to be released, probably under the name "Masters and Defever."

Sitting down with Warren and Ian was no less than entertaining, as was watching them play a live set in the intimacy of McCabe's Guitar Shop, opening for Kristin Hersh. But they could both use a bit of direction.

After Masters and De-

fever had completed their pop and slightly jazzy noodlings, Kristin Hersh took the stage.

I am beginning to think that Kristin shines best in an acoustic setting. That plaintive yet powerful voice can express worlds of emotion more effectively than when surrounded by the powerful surge of Throwing Muses. The performance was completed by the addition of Martin McCarrick on cello, rounding out Kristin's arrangements. She did all my favorites, and threw in a couple of new

songs, including one that I think is called "Cactus." It has lyrics that go, "Bless my baby eyes / Don't you know Jesus died?"

Plenty of new Throwing Muses songs were in evidence at their show the previous night at the Troubadour. To be fair, the performance was technically brilliant. But it seemed to lack some of the spark that I have seen in other Muses' shows, or the times that I have seen Kristin play solo. I think it was because she was rather drunk — she didn't interact with the audience very much, and

kept her eyes on her fingers, not wanting to hit a bum chord on her guitar. When one audience member called out for "Walking in the Dark," an old Muses song, Kristin only said she couldn't play that one anymore. When other audience members shouted encouragement, Kristin smiled ruefully and said, "No, I really can't play that one anymore. You must be drunk as I am."

To their credit, the new material sounded quite good, and I can't wait for the new album, which should be out in January. They also steamed through some powerful oldies, including "Mania," and "Vicky's Box," from their stunning debut album.

Throwing Muses also had quite excellent support from both Heidi Berry and Lisa Germano, who both played sets before the Muses came on stage. Heidi Berry, who has contributed vocals to "This Mortal Coil," and has two albums out on 4AD, also had a more powerful live presence than I had expected. Her rich, dulcet voice stems from true ability, and when her occasionally countrified folk music flagged a little in inspiration, her strong voice

cept to introduce her players) when she performed at McCabe's. She communicated with the sound booth through little frowns and eye movements. All the things she had to say were communi-



cated through her music.

Lisa Gerrard, is, of course, the other core member of Dead Can Dance. She is the one who possesses a voice more malleable than the Bulgarian Women's Choir, more unearthly than Elizabeth Fraser. On the final night that I journeyed into Los Angeles, I went to see Lisa Gerrard perform solo at McCabe's. It was, to say the least, an experience bordering on the surreal.

As I stood in line with a good friend, I pointed out to him the different rock stars exiting McCabe's and milling about the front of the guitar store. Damn if we didn't see three-fourths of His Name is Alive there (at least, their live lineup). Vocalist Karin Oliver was

"Kristin smiled ruefully and said, 'No, I really can't play that one anymore. You must be drunk as I am.'"

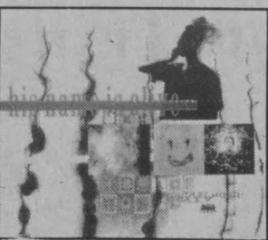
took over. Even the "die-hard rockers" who showed up for Throwing Muses were quieted by Heidi's lovely stage presence and well-trained vocal chords.

Lisa Germano, too, proved to be a lot more than I had expected. She is more than proficient on piano, violin and guitar. Even with a support band assembled only one week before the performance, they managed to rock out, drawing chuckles and cheers from the audience. Lisa's dark, twisted sense of humor belied the talent that she claims — at least in song — not to possess. She talked about her boyfriend and said she wished he was dead so he wouldn't invade her thoughts when she was trying to get stuff done. Her forthcoming album "Geek the Girl" even has a song on it called "Cancer of Everything." It was near brilliance. Need I say more?

Except perhaps to add that one should not confuse Lisa Germano with Lisa Gerrard. They both seem to represent the opposite extremes of 4AD. Lisa Gerrard said nary a word to the audience (ex-

sitting down on the sidewalk outside McCabe's, eating Chinese takeout. Brendan Perry was there too, apparently acting as sound man for Lisa Gerrard. We also saw David Narcizo and Bernard Georges, the respective drummer and bassist for Throwing Muses, as well as Ian Masters and Heidi Berry. It was a star-studded affair.

Michael Brook opened the show for Lisa Gerrard, creating brain-tickling computerized sounds on his electric guitar. Despite



the mind-bending concept, and his obviously immense skill, Brook was just an ordinary guy with a rather dry sense of humor. In fact, as he began bending his knees to the rhythm of "Ultramarine," (from his 4AD release "Cobalt Blue") I could hear the spare change in his pocket jingling.

Lisa Gerrard, on the other hand, was anything

but ordinary. She looks as if she will never change. She was wearing white, as usual, her hair rolled into its Elizabethan braid and cascading down her back. Her songs were dark and brooding, eventually moving into more percussion-oriented, tribal sounds. Occasionally there was a sort of call-and-response chanting between Lisa and her male players, who provided keyboard samples, violin, guitar, tambourine, gong, bass drum and hand claps. All of the songs were new — although I had heard a few done live with Dead Can Dance. Most of them, though, will probably be featured on Lisa's forthcoming solo album.

Naturally a few L.A. (and Santa Barbara) goths showed up, but they were few and far between. Anyone could be affected by this kind of music; not its words, but the unearthly sounds. I wonder what motivates Lisa to keep doing it. Is it a driving force to squeeze a song out, trying to make sense of random, powerful emotions, as it seems to be with Kristin Hersh? Is it a twisted need to wallow in self-centered lyrics about pain and life's oddly humorous misfortunes, as it is with Mark Kozelek and Lisa Germano? Or is it a need to create strange, often beautiful noises that defy the senses, as it is with His Name is Alive and the Pale Saints?

It could be all and any of these. Through the years, 4AD Records has been discovering exceptional artists. Sometimes they are relatively ordinary people with a finger on the pulse-point of genius, as the Pale Saints seem to be. More likely, they are idiot-savants like Mark Kozelek and Warren Defever, whose genius comes in fits and starts and often keeps them slightly removed from the ordinary people. They have their own unmistakable, unintelligible agenda — as does Kristin Hersh, and the Wolfgang Press (what exactly is Mick going on about?). And they all have the ability to create something utterly sublime. I can't think of one 4AD artist who hasn't created something of rare beauty and sheer genius; if not through an entire album, at least in a moment of inspiration.

One of the things I have heard people complain about most is that they think "all 4AD music sounds the same." Some of the music may share the same kind of atmosphere, created by This Mortal Coil, Dead Can Dance, and early albums by the Cocteau Twins. But "All Virgos Are Mad" seems to be celebrating the diversity of 4AD's music, from pop to folk to dance to noise and so on. Perhaps that is why this festival drew such a diverse crowd of people. I rarely saw the same people attending each show on any given night. There were a few, like me, who tried to see everything. But those of us who did are truly obsessed. Can't you tell?



A SPANISH VAMPIRE FILM AND A CHINESE FAMILY TALE

Just in time for Halloween, Arts and Lectures presents Guillermo del Toro's "Cronos." Yes, it's another vampire movie, but how many films have a vampire who sleeps with a teddy bear, is sickened by the sight of blood (Count Duckula excepted), and has a granddaughter named Aurora?

Del Toro is not Bram Stoker, nor is he Anne Rice. While Jesús Gris (Federico Luppi) occasionally drinks blood, there are none of the usual neck-biting scenes or the "let me drink your blood" scenes. Rather, he is a victim of his own curiosity, an antique dealer who stumbles upon the secret to eternity, and its curse.

The real vampire of the film is the Cronos device

itself. Inside this wind-up crab lives a leech, which filters the blood of the owner. Each use of machine, filmed with excruciating detail reminiscent of the eye-slicing scene in "Buñuel" and Dali's "Un Chien Andalou," further prolongs the owner's life, but at a cost. The more times the Cronos Device is activated, the more inhuman the owner becomes. The result, Gris finds, is an unquenchable taste for blood, immortality and solitude.

The evolution of Jesús Gris from antique dealer to vampire is subtle yet striking, done with increasingly intricate make-up work. The last scenes, of a vampire ready to break free from its human skin chrysalis, are stunning. By

the end, Gris is as grey as his name implies, looking more like Boris Karloff as The Mummy, than a vampire. But underneath that peeling skin is new, inhuman flesh, bone white and craving blood.

Ron Perlman as Angel de la Guardia adds a beastly twist to "Cronos." As the nephew of a man obsessed with the prospect of immortality, he must search out the Cronos device and destroy those who stand in his way. But how does one destroy a vampire?

Cronos shows at 7 p.m. on Monday Oct. 24 in Campbell Hall. Information can be obtained at 893-3535.

—Sarah Crane

Just as the fictional Joy Luck Club has nothing to do with joy and nothing to do with luck and everything to do with hope, so does Wayne Wang's film "The Joy Luck Club," from Amy Tan's novel of the same name. It is about hope — the hope four Chinese mothers have for their American-born daughters.

Wang, however does not stop with hope. Rather, he uses the film to explore the gaps in generation, culture and communication between mothers and daughters, and the pains and fears that can arise from these gaps. Each generation thinks it has failed the other, and not until mother and daughter learn to talk and listen are these gaps bridged.

To call "The Joy Luck Club" one film is to sell it short. It is really eight films — each with its own beginning, climax and poignant conclusion, each with its own voice-over narration. These stories are held together by the journey of June Ming to China to meet the sisters she didn't know she had; to confront her mother's past and to symbolically become her mother.

Though the film is beautiful and rewarding, the multiple points of view may make you feel uneasy and disoriented. At first I even felt a tad claustrophobic.

If you are a man, you



may feel attacked or wrongly stereotyped. At least, I feel that some of the male characters are overplayed. I realize that *The Joy Luck Club* takes place at the end of Imperial China, when arranging marriages was still a common and accepted practice, and women were low on the social totem pole, but that does not explain the portrayal of all of the men in the film. As a woman, I did find many of the scenes hard to watch, but I did watch, and am glad I did. Gender issues and the status of women in the human race need addressing, and "The Joy Luck Club" does a wonderful job of it, while avoiding gratuitous melodrama.

Visually, the film is a feast. The rich, saturated earthly color scheme is counterpointed by bright primary colors for added drama. Each frame is carefully crafted, leaving no

element out of place. As you watch, let your eyes wander through the backgrounds, and enjoy the visual splendor.

Wayne Wang's "The Joy Luck Club" is a powerful film, driven by a compelling soundtrack. It is emotionally charged and beautifully filmed. While you watch, however, keep in mind your own relationship to your parents. Maybe, when the last reel is complete, you should go home, write a letter, or telephone. Just as in the film, there are probably things you don't know about them and they don't know about you. I'm not suggesting that you tell all, but maybe the film will provide the excuse to talk.

The film shows tonight at 7 p.m. in Campbell Hall. For more information, call Arts & Lectures at 893-3535.

—Sarah Crane



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HE DIRECTS... IN A DRESS

From within the medium of black and white, standing confident in the high-heeled budget of \$18 million, Tim Burton's "Ed Wood" embodies the persona of drag.

Stripped of accessories, "Ed Wood" tells of the trials and tribulations of Hollywood's worst filmmaker, Edward D. Wood Jr. Wood, played by Johnny Depp, wants what all filmmakers want: to make films on their terms. To create. To dress in women's clothing.

The film remains on the positive side of this often maligned figure. Rather than mocking the late filmmaker, "Ed Wood" pays tribute to a man who wouldn't take no for an answer. "Oh, its the worst film you've ever seen, you say?" Wood says. "Well, my next one will be better!" It means a lot, coming from the creator of such films as the semi-autobiographical transvestite flick "Glen or Glenda," and "Plan 9

From Outer Space," a sci-fi "thriller" fully equipped with paper-plate flying saucers.

Overall, "Ed Wood" reflects the positive years of the director in the Ward-and-June era of the 1950s. Wood is young, his girlfriend is beautiful and his secret is out. "I like to wear women's clothing."

Surrounding himself with an "Addams Family"-meets-"The Munsters"-type crew, Wood dedicates his life to making films on a budget of pocket change. While the cast of "Ed Wood" is sprinkled with Hollywood favorites such as Bill Murray, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Johnny Depp himself, it is Martin Landau's portrayal of Bela Lugosi that steals the show.

For two brief hours, Bela Lugosi is alive and kicking before our eyes, as he and Wood team together to make and sell themselves. As Wood raises Lugosi from a graveyard of burned-out ac-



tors, he sparks a softness from the bitter old junkie.

But beyond Landau's convincing performance as Lugosi, it is difficult to move past the "21 Jump Street" "Deppness" of Depp's portrayal of Wood.

At times this becomes distracting, but in the end Depp's nasal sportscaster/salesman voice reminds the audience that "Ed

Wood" is a comedy, and not another bad film inspired by Wood. As Bela Lugosi once said about his vampire films, "The pure horror both repels and attracts the audience."

Put to practice, the same can be said about "Ed Wood." The pure cheesiness of the film both repels and attracts audiences.

—Erin Wilson



IT TALKS YOU TO DEATH

For months now, we have been teased by ads, promos, reviews, and articles about "Pulp Fiction," the latest film from the latest king of blood, guns, and snappy dialogue, Quentin Tarantino. Winner of Best Picture at the Cannes Film Festival last spring, "Fiction" is probably one of the most talked-about films of the year, keeping "cinophiles" in coffeehouses around the world asking "What's Quentin going to pull out of his sleeve this time?"

When you cut through it all, what you get is a tight, well-written film with lots of dialogue and probably too much wit for its own good.

Set against the backdrop of underworld Los Angeles, "Fiction" follows, in skewed chronological order, three days in the lives of a shady crime boss, his bumbling gunmen, his seductive wife, a profiteering boxer, two backwoods hillbillies, and Steve Buscemi in a Buddy Holly getup. Characters fall in and out of the narrative, which is really three short vignettes skillfully woven together by Tarantino.

As the writer/director of "Reservoir Dogs," and the

writer of "True Romance," he created films with as many quotable one-liners as lead-filled corpses. This happens here too, resulting in a strange mix of comedy, drama and action.

But what really makes Tarantino so good is in many ways the one fatal flaw of "Pulp Fiction": his ability to write witty dialogue. Scenes go on and on with witty chitchat between one gunman and another, gunman and boss' wife, wife and waiter, gunman and soon-to-be victim, and so on. Highly entertaining, much of it could have been cut without damage to the plot.

The film stars John Travolta, Samuel L. Jackson, Uma Thurman, Harvey Keitel, Bruce Willis, and an array of other stars who contribute cameos and performances of various lengths. This had led to an assumption that "Pulp Fiction" is like a darker and more violent version of Robert Altman's "Short Cuts," but it becomes apparent in viewing "Fiction" that the stars involved were chosen not for their name value, but for their ability to play the parts given to them.

Travolta shows his true



ability, finally performing a worthy role. Willis and Thurman put in better-than-average work, but Jackson is the real scene stealer as a Bible-thumping hit man. The only disappointment of the film's ensemble was Tarantino himself, who was about as convincing in his role as any of the cast members of "Saved by the Bell." Why does Tarantino insist on putting himself in everything he directs?

Technically speaking, "Fiction" is clean, full of the same sort of "gritty realism" that made "Dogs" exciting and fresh. Tarantino effectively uses cam-

era, sound, editing and music to set a creepy film-noir mood, with some downright wacky stylistic curveballs thrown in.

Despite the long running time, Tarantino holds your attention by *not* showing you exactly what you want to see. In "Dogs," it was the diamond heist that was not shown, and the technique is used again to varying degrees in "Fiction." We are engrossed because we are kept guessing.

—Kelly Hartman

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