

Music Reviews Continued...

I like it. I'm not going to single out any tracks, cos really, none stand out (no stinkers, either). However, "Catsup", "2 Chord Jazz", "4 Days Prior", "Eugene", and "Give Them What They Want" are all instrumentals—you don't have to worry about ignoring boring lyrics of flat voices. And there's enough music on the rest of the tracks to keep them interesting. The last cut, "Give Them What They Want", is a good example of the humour that tends to be an undercurrent to this type of music. Give 'em one decent hook, and Box Lunch could be Canadian College radio faves, no problem.

Andrew Sneddon

22 BRIDES



22 Brides
22 Brides
(Attic)

22 Brides are, fundamentally, Carrie and Libby Johnson, sisters who have been playing together for a long time. Their bio material stresses the fact that they moved around a lot in a military family, and were performing publicly while living in Nairobi. My expectations were raised for something exotic, and I was quite disappointed to find something much more mundane. "This sounds like... Heart!" was my first response, and I psyched myself up to dump on the cassette.

Not so now, however. After my first letdown, I responded anew to the record, and it's not half-bad. First things first—the Heart-curse was a kneejerk reaction to being disappointed about hearing sisters singing over g's. This music is much more interesting—much better, period—than Heart's. It sounds a little blandly familiar at first, but music has little nuances that sweeten things quite a bit. There are vocal harmony undertones, and electric guitar hooks, and variety in tone, from basic acoustic guitar interplay to full band interaction (approaching a veritable wall at times). Even a most Heart-like tune such as "David" gets cracked open at the chorus, and pumped past glam-rock mediocrity.

Also, these two sisters, as noted, have been around. They're not going to bother singing about the boy next door, or (shudder) some over-glorified summertime from their youth. They've got darker topics on their minds. "City of Brides" is about a city in India where young girls are sold as brides to wealthy men. "King for a Day" is a first person exploration of a serial killer's experiences.

The bio material states, "22 Brides sing with power, passion, and beauty,"

and it's actually right on the mark. This cassette is simply produced, allowing the voices, hooks, and lyrics to stand effectively against the spartan sounds of acoustic guitar and piano, supplemented on occasion by subdued electric instruments. The more I listen to this album, the more I appreciate the thought and care that went into every song. It's not perfect, mind you—my Heart comparisons aren't far enough off the mark at times—but with some practice writing songs with more engaging hooks, 22 Brides could be a band to be reckoned with.

Andrew Sneddon

Gil Scott-Heron
Spirits
(Cargo Records)

Here's a man with some history—a seasoned professional to review, instead of a wet-behind-the-ears rookie. According to his bio material, Gil Scott-Heron has been an important voice for the black community since he wrote and recorded his first material in the late sixties and early seventies. His first recordings contained both honest crooning and a loud, speaking delivery over hard beats. This man has been credited with sowing the seeds of rap, and probably not without good reason.

Spirits, however, is the music and thought of a family man in his forties. It still contains speaking and crooning, and both beat and groove and jazzy music. But there's no anger, really—there's deep concern, and heartfelt thankfulness, and a sense of history. This cassette, as much as it might fit within Scott-Heron's own body of work, strikes me as very much the spiritual descendant of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?"—the sound of a person standing back and calmly, maturely voicing concern. I'm deeply impressed.

As interesting as these songs are, with the impressions of a sensitive, mature adult about leading one's life and taking care of a community and love and family and politics, the most interesting song for me is the opening track, "Message To The Messengers". This track is explicitly addressed to young rappers. Scott-Heron portrays them as educators, and really asks them to take responsibility for their words and actions. He establishes his credibility by stating he's been doing the same sort of thing for a long time, and then starts in. "Message" is the sound of a torch being passed—the burden of thought and education is passed from Gil to people twenty years younger. The song is a call for peace and thought—get your facts and head straight, then open your mouth. As much as anything, it's a call for community, between and within generation. At one and the same time, Gil Scott-Heron takes rappers down a peg and issues them a measure of maturity and respect that's enviable. It's a remarkable song for anyone sensitive to their place in the world at large.

Andrew Sneddon



One
Smokin' The Goat
(EMI)

Is it reggae? Is it rock? Is it soul? Who cares—this is ONE band you just have to hear to believe. Luckily they tour regularly unless they are working on an album but unfortunately for us they seem to migrate between their home town of Toronto and Whistler, BC with several regular stops in between. Recently spoke with band member Mike Constantino (the best cook in the band) between sets at a gig at "Silver City" (affectionately referred to as "Syphilis City") in Banff. I attempted to convince (or coerce) them into touring the East. I strongly doubt I had anything to do with it but strangely enough shortly afterwards, I learned that One had begun organising their first tour of anywhere east of Toronto since they signed with a major label. Sadly, this was put on the back burner for yet another run of the Ontario University scene. Who can blame them for returning to a place where people know who they are and they're guaranteed to be well received?

I guess that's why they make CD's. "Smoking the Goats" is the title of ONE's latest and it is definitely worth listening to. So far the disk is being led by the third track "Wide Load". It is an incredible song but if you're easily offended and not listening carefully this song might appear insulting. However, after deciphering a couple of the key lyrics you may discover that it is actually quite harmless and you will undoubtedly succumb to the "butt-shaking sounds" of this eight-piece ensemble and fall into a hypnotic hula (or even a mesmerising mosh?)

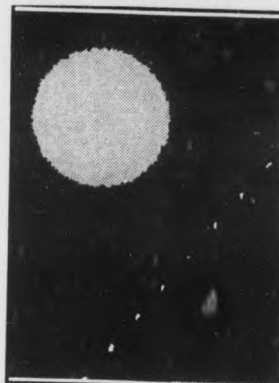
I was happy to hear is that One is finally being played now in Halifax bars and even here on our very own CHSR. Perhaps this could mean we might be in store for a performance! If you like the CD (and I'm sure you will) you'll love them live. Their sensational stage presence and horn section combined with their compulsive stage diving always makes them a crowd pleaser. The only downer on seeing them live is that you will not have the pleasure of enjoying back-up vocals by Beck as you've never heard him before, in track 6, "Bully on the Dance Floor" and the guitar of Eddy Grant which appeared on their last disk "A Matter of Truth" released in 1992.

You may be wondering what kind of music this is to attract both Beck and Eddy Grant. The truth is that it is too hard to classify. To use ONE's own words would be to describe them as reggae-rock and I'm not sure I can argue.

Anyhoo, it's great music and a terrific CD. Remember: "Free your goats and the rest will follow..."

Dugald McLaren

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