

ROCK

Hot Local Music on Disk

CD Reviews

DEBRA JENNINGS

***Perils and Passions*, Western Vogue**

With their third CD, released February 5, Denver-based Western Vogue continues to update their appealing blend of country, rock, and blues. *Perils and Passions* emerges with more depth than their previous CDs. Electric guitarist John Ashton and bassist Mike Reid add background vocals. Steel guitarist Josh Dubin (of the Holly Dunn band) gives "If These Tears had Wings" a decidedly country flavor. Keyboard virtuoso Patrick Moraz (formerly with The Moody Blues) spices up a couple songs.

Each element, including William Penner's solid percussion, forms an unobtrusive yet vital backdrop for what has become Western Vogue's trademark—Shauna Streckler's powerhouse vocals. On *Perils and Passions*, her voice continues to amaze whether she's crooning an unforgettable ballad or delivering a soulful tongue-lashing. Streckler plays acoustic guitar and keyboards on the album, and produces the timely, intelligent lyrics the group's fans have come to expect.

Western Vogue groupies will love this CD. (And if you've never heard their stuff, well, get off your "High Horse, baby" and check 'em out!)

***The Quiet Room*, The Quiet Room**

The only problem with this debut cassette is the length—it's too short. Listening to only three songs from Denver's answer to thinking man's metal is like drinking just one beer on Friday night—it tastes *really* good, but leaves you thirsty for more.

"Dreaming Reality" leads listeners into a surrealistic storm. The Quiet Room casts off conventional melodies and heads straight for deep water. But not so deep they lose the rest of us. Like a beacon, Chadd Castor's piercing voice slices through the air.

"Memories of Tomorrow" features relentless guitar rhythms worthy of a head-banger's wet dream. In fact, the fretwork of Jason Boudreau and George Glasco so impressed a certain porn-movie producer, he's including the song in one of his films. Unfortunately, guitars and vocals sometimes overshadow bassist Rich Ross and (former) drummer Mike Rice.

The tape winds up with "Patiently Waiting," a technical tour-de-force that could also serve as the motto for Quiet Room fans eagerly awaiting a full-length cassette. Sorry, troops, the band probably won't return to the studio until summer.

Filly, Pretty Things, World Separation

You know you're in trouble when a band puts a disclaimer on their cassette ("Caution: World Separation is not responsible for any unusual side effects resulting from listening to this music.") These guys weren't born last Tuesday. They know their music could cause heart attacks in conservatives, frighten small children, and make lab rats foam at the mouth. It's weird stuff, Maynard. Kinda like Art of Noise (remember them?) only less annoying. World Separation is innovative, but cohesive.

David Dinsmore's vocals go from a purr to a roar without warning; his trombone often sounds like an elephant in heat. Shawn Morrison's guitar attacks several musical genre's, kicking butt and taking names. Bleek Future's bass and Monte Thorin's drums remain calmer, but contribute more than their two cents worth to the group's sound.

The mix keeps listeners on their toes. On "House of String," Dinsmore makes the ivories talk, producing a deliciously disturbing effect. "Flattop Cop" pushes discord to the limit, but stays within effective boundaries. "Dark to Light" sounds like a Peter Murphy song, only with balls.

These guys take chances, musically and lyrically. They don't want to be your MTV buddy. But if you dig an original, unpredictable jam, World Separation will be your best friend.

Sonic Gallery, Oh No Yo Yo

Recipe for Mind-blowing Musical Stew: 1 c. Frank Zappa unpredictability; 1 c. Tom Waits weirdness; 3/4 c. Alice Cooper creepiness; 1/2 c. Al Jorgeson-esque vocals; 20+ musicians. Mix for 3,000-5,000 hours. Place in CD player. Attach headphones and let your aural senses bake until done.

For those who don't like cooking from scratch, a ready-to-bake mix is also available, *Sonic Gallery* by Oh No Yo Yo (aka Paul Stenvig of Denver's Beyond Sound Studios). This seven-song collection will satisfy the appetite of anyone who craves an avant-garde, surreal, technical, guitar-laden, painstakingly-mastered musical feast. It's bursting with flavors, so many your senses will be racing around like mice on a cheese farm trying to taste them all.

Other ingredients include thought-provoking lyrics; the sound of 10,000 bee stings (produced by bouncing and stacking 600 guitar tracks); and an eerie dialogue between man and the universal godhead (which sounds like—yikes! — a computer).

Yum-yum, different *is* good.

Be Kind, The Jonez

Won't you please come with me, to the bottom of the sea?

"Hey, whatcha listening to? *The Little Mermaid* soundtrack?"

"Nah, no fish-girl is this funky. Besides, you ever hear kick-ass guitar in a Disney flick?"

"Who is it then? Living Colour?"

"The Jonez, man, those dudes from Denver. It's their new CD, *Be Kind*."

"Oh yeah, I heard one of their songs, 'Good Pussycat.' Reminded me of Rick James—you know, kinda sexy and playful."

"Yeah, but not all of it's like that. They got some stuff on this CD that would curl your hair. Political stuff—'Days of Rage,' 'Holiday.' Some angry rap, man."

"I like how their singer—what's his name?"

"Byron Shaw."

"Yeah. I like how he screams on 'Bigots Don't Dig It.' Then that chick starts sayin', 'Mama Africa.' And the guitars blow my mind! How do they get all that on one song?"

"Cause they're *good*, man. They're pros. Hell, they use horns, they do some reggae—on 'Dead Man' Shaw sounds just like Bob Marley."

"So who else is in the band?"

"Let's see . . . wow, Shaw does percussion, too! Tim Miller plays lead guitar, John Hamala plays bass, and — get this! Some dude named 'Psycho' plays drums and guitar."

"Man, I think they're all psycho. They gotta be to dream this stuff up!"

"Yeah, but that's what I like about 'em."

"Me, too. Hey, lemme borrow that CD."

"No way, man, go get your own!"

Out From the Inside, The Fringe

Despite their name, these four guys are as mainstream as Huey Lewis and the News. This 10-song CD offers a mellow mingling of pop, rock, reggae, and soul, with splashes of R&B and jazz. They work this mix well; unfortunately, so do a million other bands.

But what they lack in originality, The Fringe makes up for in talent. Eric Baines' lead vocals are smooth as chocolate and just as sweet. He sings better than he writes, however. If you can get past the sometimes sappy lyrics, Baines' bass line, Tone Hanuman's ivory-tinkling, Kevin Lehman's rhythm-making and Steven Baines' guitar-work will get your head bobbing and your ears smiling.