

arts & entertainment

Queen's new album shows evidence of complacency

By Jeff Taebel

After the release of last year's disappointing *News Of The World*, critics and fans alike wondered why a band as talented as Queen would sink to such musical depths. After all, "We Will Rock You" was a far cry from "Bohemian Rhapsody," any way you look at it. The puzzling thing about *News Of The World* was the fact that Queen's musicianship seemed to slide downhill at the point when it should have been taking off, especially after the success of *A Night At The Opera* and *A Day At The Races*.

album review

Certainly lead singer Freddie Mercury's multi-layered vocal posturings are unique among rock vocalists and guitarists Brian May has only Boston's Tom Scholz as his peer in the art of guitar overdubs.

One might surmise that *News Of The World* was only a temporary snag in Queen's development, however, their latest release, entitled *Jazz*, suggests that this might not be the case.

Rush job

Jazz, like *News Of The World*, sounds like it was a rush job, containing some strong material, supplemented with a lot of filler. If the best songs from *News Of The World* and *Jazz* were incorporated into one album, the results might have been more favorable. But why settle for one platinum LP when you can stretch your material into two?

First of all, one should not be misled by the title *Jazz*. The album contains no music that could be misconstrued as such by even the most imaginative listener. Instead, *Jazz* contains a strange combination of songs ranging from overbearing hard-rock to bland, AM-oriented pop.

Conflicting ideas

Perhaps this is because the four members of the band have different ideas as to what the band should be. Brian May, bassist John Deacon and drummer

Roger Taylor seem to be making a play for the Ted Nugent/Foghat audience with their writing and playing. They are successful enough in their endeavors, except that one might have expected a loftier set of aspirations from musicians such as these.

Freddie Mercury, on the other hand, seems hell-bent on establishing himself as a vocalist to be reckoned with, without the aid of overdubs. His writing suggests that he wants to be recognized as a balladeer of merit if it's the last thing he does. At the rate he's going, it probably will be.

Runs out of steam

Jazz opens with "Mustapha," which Mercury describes as "the first Moroccan rock and roll song." The song is different, if nothing else, and Mercury turns in a powerful vocal performance. However, it runs out of steam before it ever really develops.

The side's second offering, May's "Fat Bottomed Girls" represents Queen's concession to Aerosmith mentality and is cer-

tainly not the kind of number one you would expect from a group of "sophisticated" musicians.

Mercury's "Jealousy" sounds like a Wings reject, as he apes McCartney's vocal style, with limited success.

"Jealousy" is followed by "Bicycle Race," which exhibits Mercury's singular capacity for building an angelic vocal chorus out of an incredibly simple melodic line. The song is loosely contrived around the all-female nude bicycle race that Queen sponsored as a promotional stunt for this album. A poster depicting the proceedings is included in the jacket.

Almost saved

Side one is almost redeemed by John Deacon's scorching rocker, "If You Can't Beat Them." Never mind that it sounds a lot like Boston because at this point it doesn't seem to matter who's copying who.

Side two opens with another hard rocker by May called "Dead On Time"

which profoundly claims that the world is a rat race. This tune sounds like a logical antecedent to Bachman-Turner Overdrive's "Taking Care of Business," only without any of BTO's tongue-in-cheek aplomb.

However, May redeems himself with "Dreamer's Ball," the side's third offering. "Dreamer's Ball" is a perfect easy-going vehicle for Mercury's vocal extensions as well as being a showcase for May's guitar talents.

Disaster strikes

"Dreamer's Ball" is followed by Roger Taylor's disastrous "Fun It." This tune is about as close to disco as Queen is going to get without stepping into the realm of satire.

The song is cliché-ridden, with police whistles punctuating "Don't shun it/Fun it!" chorus. Taylor's drumming on this number is mediocre at best and is truly indicative of his sluggish performance throughout the album.

Continued on Page 13



Photo by Christopher Hooper

Queen's new album, *Jazz*, remains at the same level of their *News of the World* release.

Professor suggests open mind for 'Sea Gull' audiences

By Kent Warneke

"It's his brilliant characterization and the full development of even his lesser characters that make Chekhov's plays perfect," according to Rex McGraw, professor and chairman of Theatre Arts at UNL.

Perfection is a word not used often when talking in terms of the performing arts, much less playwrights and their works. McGraw says he thinks the masterful Russian playwright was perfect.

Chekhov was born in 1867 and became a doctor, but earned his living as a short story writer for newspapers and by writing vaudeville sketches, before writing his first "perfect" play in 1896.

"The first performance of Chekhov's *The Sea Gull* was disastrous," McGraw said, "but in 1898, the Moscow Arts Theatre, probably the single most important theatre in the 20th century, did a production of *The Sea Gull* and they have become a symbol for that ever since."

Next Theatre offer

The Sea Gull is the University Theatre's next mainstage offering running December 8, 9 and 12 through the 16th in the Temple building. It is directed by McGraw.

McGraw says he believes, on the basis of the four masterpieces that he created, *The Sea Gull*, *Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard*, that Chekhov is the greatest playwright ever to put pen to paper.

"Chekhov's plays show a complete, total representation of human representatives, not stereotyped in any way. Each character has its strong and weak points showing a tremendously wide range of emotions even on one solitary page," McGraw said. "It's definitely a challenge for

any actor or actress, but I think they like it that way."

Undergraduate interest

McGraw said he became interested in Chekhov's work as an undergraduate when he took a course in modern drama and as the course went on, he became more and more engrossed with Chekhov.

Unlike many playwrights, Chekhov is not overly-concerned with plots, McGraw said.

"Taking the play, *The Sea Gull*, for an example, it has ten different characters which are so involved, that takes the emphasis of the play," McGraw said. "Things do happen concerning the plot, but it's really not important and Chekhov was the first playwright to do this."

'Messiah' to be broadcast live on Sunday

George Frederick Handel's *Messiah*, a holiday tradition throughout the world, will be performed this Sunday, Dec. 10 at 2:30 p.m. at Kimball Hall, 11th and R streets.

entertainment notes

The Dec. 10 performance marks the first time the *Messiah* will be performed in Kimball Hall. It also is the first Lincoln performance of the *Messiah* to be televised on ETV as a live broadcast.

This performance of *Messiah* will be conducted by Harold Evans and performed by University Singers and members of the UNL Symphony Orchestra. Soloists for the show will be soprano Lois Vaccariello,

And it has been only in the past 10 to 15 years that Chekhov's plays have come across on the stage as they were intended to when they were written.

Complexity terrifying

"His plays are so complex in everything that it terrifies most directors to even attempt one of his works," McGraw said. "Besides, a lot of misconceptions have arisen about his works."

"When Chekhov first wrote his plays, he intended them to have a subtle humor in them, but traditionally that has come across only as heavy drama," McGraw said.

"With the advent of new advancements in the field of human psychology, the humorous side of Chekhov's plays has been coming out recently," McGraw said.

"Chekhov wrote brilliant psychological studies in his plays and it is just now that people are really understanding his plays."

Subtle humor

But Chekhov's works are not the side-splitting humor that many people expect when going to a play termed humorous, McGraw explained.

"His plays are not popular fare or pure entertainment; they're much more profound and a lot of damage has been done to his works by English instructors who don't fully understand his writings."

"If you're planning to attend a production of one of Chekhov's plays, you have to do it willingly and with an open mind, and then I'm sure you'll enjoy it more than you would expect."

mezzo-soprano Denise Hurley, tenor Cary Michaels, and baritone Scott Root.

The performance will be based on the edition prepared by the Englishman, Watkins Shaw, in 1959, which attempts to recreate the orchestral forces originally used by Handel. The use of a smaller orchestra and chorus will offer Lincoln audiences a unique look into *Messiah* as Handel originally conceived it.

For tickets and more information, contact the Kimball Hall Box Office in room 113, Westbrook Music Building or call 472-3375.

Five groups of UNL student instrumentalists will present a free public concert of chamber music at 8 p.m. tonight in Kimball Recital Hall.

A string quartet, Dan Rains and Laurie Scott, violins, Jonathan Brodie, viola, and Bruce McLean, cello, will open the pro-

gram with Haydn's *Quartet in D major, Opus 20, No. 4*.

A group named "The Eight-fifteen Quintet" will present a *Suite for Wind Instruments, Opus 57* by Lefebure. The quintet is composed of Joy Werner, flute, Amy Duerr, oboe, Karen Sandene, bassoon, Roger Mastalir, clarinet, and Steve Getty, French horn.

Dohnanyi's *Trio, Opus 10* will be played by Sandra McNally, violin, Teresa Beck, viola, and Carol Warren, cello, and Lynn Nesmith, piano, will perform the *Shostakovich Trio*.

The final number on the program will be *Rounds for Brass Quintet* by McCabe, featuring trumpeters Jeffrey Grass and Jeffrey Patton with Larry Ahokas, french horn, Loy Hetrick, trombone, and John Thomason, tuba.