

# arts / entertainment



Photo by Mary Anne Golon

Drummer Max Roach played to an appreciative crowd at Kimball Hall Wednesday.

## Roach's golden drum showcases music mastery

By Deb Emery

They say some people are born with a silver spoon in their mouth, however, in Max Roach's instance, he was born with a pair of golden drum sticks in his hands.

### music review

The internationally known jazz drummer performed with his quartet at Kimball Recital Hall Wednesday evening to highlight Lincoln Jazz Week.

Roach's appearance was one of several events scheduled this week to promote jazz music and musicians.

The Leroy Critcher Jazz Quartet opened the concert for Roach. This Lincoln group warmed the crowd with jazz drummer Jeffrey Johnson rhythmically lifting the crowd to mile-high altitudes, effectively demonstrating the high quality found in some of local jazz groups.

Then after a brief intermission, the scholarly-looking Roach walked on stage alone to open the second half with a percussion piece entitled, *The Drum Also Waltzes*.

Roach's years as an accomplished musician were evident as he played with a mastery expected from one who ranks as one of jazz greats.

Roach's hands moved in fluid, blurring motions that often resembled the fast fluttering of a hummingbird's wing instead of human hands.

At the conclusion the solo number, the rest of Roach's group walked on stage to play a number called *It's Time*.

His group, with whom he has played for six years, included Odean Pope, tenor sax; Cecil Bridgewater, trumpet; and Calvin Hill, bass.

Roach's group complimented his syncopated rhythms. Each member of the quartet is a star in his own right.

During the second number, Roach produced some unusual sounds from his cymbals by striking them in different ways. Roach could easily write a book on 1,001 ways to play the cymbals.

Sometimes Roach seemed to attack the cymbals with burning intensity resembling someone venting their frustration on an old car, but in a regulated, rhythmic fashion.

Roach produced such a variety of sounds from his drum set that it was hard to believe he was only playing one set.

However, Roach's versatility was not limited to him. His group performed with equal versatility on their instruments.

Bridgewater's trumpet was bright and sassy, Pope's sax produced heavy, mellow sounds, while Hill's bass strings matched the blur of Roach's sticks.

Roach closed the concert the same way he began with a stirring percussion performance that brought applause from a satisfied crowd.

Warm receptions are no stranger to Roach, who started performing in the 1940s with the Charlie Parker Quintet. In the 1950s, he formed a group with trumpeter Clifford Brown which featured a leading jazz saxophonist, Sonny Rawlins.

In 1971, Roach took his music to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst where he helped establish jazz as a major in the music department.

He composed *M'Boom-Re*, a widely acclaimed jazz percussion piece and he won the Grand Prix du disque, a French grammy award for jazz.

"My goal is to make drums as much of a solo instrument as solo guitar, or piano," Roach said.

## Prose poems of waking, sleeping use tired images

By Bill Regier

Tall and thin, Robert Bly's collection of prose poems, *This Body is Made of Camphor and Gopherwood*, is as easy to lift as to put down. Gendron Jensen's drawings, an animated sequence of an empty shell, gives the poems their adequate symbol. There is even a hovering smell of fish.

### book review

The book demands a concentration that Jensen's drawings mercifully relieve. Bly forces his reader into what he calls imaginative "leaps." Were these leaps themselves not harrowing enough, he leads the reader to them blindfolded, dizzy, and crying for the Earth-mother.

Bly claims to be one of the very few current American poets who earn a living writing poems without needing a university teaching job for income. This is only partly true. If his income from university guest lectureships were to vanish, Bly would be closer to hunger.

#### Poem built with bricks

For years he has been working in the anomalous form called the "prose poem," a form that builds with soft bricks. *This Body is Made of Camphor and Gopherwood* reconstructs many themes approached in his National Book Award winning *Light Around the Body* (1967) and *Sleepers Joining Hands* (1973).

The latter especially dwell in the twilight ruckus of waking and sleeping, the same field his newest collection surveys. The language lulls as much as it stimulates.

"And later I will go inside, and lie down on my bed, and suddenly my moon will vanish. The sleeper will go down toward utter darkness . . . Who will be with him? He will meet another prisoner in the

dungeon, alone with the baker.

"The moon outside the bedroom will travel through the arms reached up to it . . . It will go on, looking . . ."

#### Left gulping

So will we, in the half-light of the submarine. That is the sublimity of Bly's work: it leaves one gulping nitrogen in deep sea.

The prose poem has a prestigious history studded with such gems as Mallarme's "Poemes en prose" and Rimbaud's "Illuminations." But to

compare Bly's sleepy swagger to these predecessors is to do him no favor. Bly's prose poems are repetitive, both in tone and imagery: their fascination is limited to brief hypnagogia.

#### Preoccupations known

Bly's preoccupations with snow, horses, and the "dark" are well-known. They return like loud relatives in every new book of his.

Use and reuse of these images prevents any originality in Bly's poetry. *This Body is Made of Camphor and Gopherwood* is so

full of Bly's predictable images that the book seems to be one-tenth poetry and nine-tenths signature.

No doubt this misses Bly's point. We are free to believe that his poetry does somehow manage to purify the vital juices. If read from cover to cover, the poems should remind the reader that the mind is a playground in itself. Since our legs are too long for the swings now, we might kick back and forth with Bly, a little above the ground, a little closer to the vacant sky.

## Outlaw band experiments with style

By Carla Engstrom

The Outlaws have been labeled a country rock band by most critics, but the band continues to experiment with its writing style by putting more emphasis on rock, according to lead guitarist and vocalist Billy Jones.

"We've gone more into rock, but we'll still rely on country influences," Jones said in a telephone interview.

Branching into a new writing style has left the Outlaws in limbo as to a label for their music style.

Jones said he has a hard time explaining what type of music the band plays.

"I don't know if a label has been made for us yet."

The Outlaws will give Lincoln audiences a chance to hear their style Saturday at 8 p.m. in the Pershing Municipal Auditorium.

The Outlaws' writing style sets them apart from other bands of the same vein, Jones said.

"We have four major writers instead of the usual one (writer) that most bands have."

#### Variety of influences

The Outlaws offer more variety in their music because the writers rely on different influences such as symphonic, rock and country when they compose, the guitarist explained.

These different styles are fused together to make the Outlaws, he said. Being basically a guitar band has its disadvantages.

"You're really limited in the kinds of music you can pursue. But the guitar is the main strategy and people seem to enjoy that," he said.

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