

Balcony Scene

BLUES VIEW

Sherman Rubin

Party scene anywhere hair grows long: "Yeah, I dig the blues, that Eddie Clampton really gets it on, he's the heaviest, dynamite mother there is." Well, how about that? That's the blues? That's 1969 white "hip" talkin' to ya. White "hip" has never quite come out of the white (into the dark). Years ago he dug the "blues" of Mildred Bailey and even Sophie Tucker, that's ok, to each his own. But, that leaves to chance the lives of far too many black musicians who still play for pennies in places like Chicago's South and West sides, who don't even get credit for giving America a music that infiltrates even the Pepsi Generation's whitest of white institutions, the television commercial. (Dig the melody behind the old "you get a lot to like with a Marlboro" ad!)

Chess Records is a blues company. In its vaults are recordings by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, etc., etc. Not a child of the post-war baby-boom among them. All of them spent time living in Chicago's nineteen forties and fifties. Blues incubator, the birthplace of city blues. It is too easily forgotten that much of the music that has been miscarried upon us since then (most notably in the 60's) would not even have been given the opportunity of conception without the organ of Chicago, and that modern blues possibly wouldn't have grown without the pioneering of Muddy Waters. His many bands listed personnel including Willie Dixon, Otis Spann, Fred Below, Jimmy Cotten, Little Walter, S. P. Leary, Francis Clay, Sam Lawhorne, George Smith and the great James A. Lane who comes to us as Jimmy Rogers.

The liner notes tell us that Jimmy was in Chicago by 1945, soon started working with Little Walter, Sunnyland Slim and Baby Leroy Foster and joined Muddy in 1949. He played guitar with Muddy's band for eight years and retired to Chicago's West side in 1959.

This album (long awaited, little of Jimmy's work is available except for scattered cuts on Chess's Blues Volumes series and early Waters sides) contains 14 tunes recorded between 1950 and 1956.

They range from good to incredible. All, however, are better than the pre-puberty mutterings of Johnny Winter, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck and friends. (that goes without question) Included are Jimmy's most well-known tune "That's Alright" and the gem "Walking By Myself" (recently given an interesting treatment by Paul Butterfield, one of the few REAL white bluesmen). There's lots of Little Walter's wonderful harmonica on this album as well as some fine work by the lesser known Big Walter Horton. The always welcome Muddy Waters' guitar is heard on five cuts, all personnel is listed in detail, on the album jacket.

Chicago Blues, when it comes from Chicago is, if nothing else, real. It has not been shaped by a world of Filmore's East and West, Suburban swimming pool bliss or Plastic Onos. I strongly advise that you don't run out and buy this collector's item unless you vomit at the sound of a Kooper Session, chuckle when you hear that this or that new young discovery has truly "lived the blues" or feel more than a little sad when you realize that Muddy Waters can't possibly live as long as you and I. We're all awfully young you know.

On Sunday, January 28th, I entered Symphony Hall with the opinion that Sviatoslav Richter was the greatest pianist in the world. When I left the hall that afternoon my opinion had not changed in the slightest--in fact, it had been strengthened. Richter is the most powerful, and at the same time, the most delicate pianist I have ever heard. He has the ability to shake the walls with resounding sforzandi or caress a phrase with the utmost subtlety. He appears, in performance, not to be playing the piano but to be a part of the piano--the keys being merely extensions of his fingers. He molds and shapes the sound emerging from his instrument in the same way a sculptor forms clay into an image. The sheer speed that his fingers are capable of attaining is staggering to watch and his commitment to his task is awe inspiring. He is simply one of the most amazing musical phenomena of our time.

Richter's program offered the completely packed Symphony Hall an opportunity to witness all of the characteristics of his genius that I have described. The program began with a set of Schubert variations (on a theme by Huettnerbrenner)--a very unpretentious little gem which never really reaches the profundity of some of Schubert's last piano works, such as the Sonata in B-flat.

Richter displayed his ability to maintain the rhythmic pulse of each variation while allowing the melodic flow to emerge clearly from the texture. The same can be said of the five Schumann Fantasiestücke, Opus 12. Richter drew excerpts from these pieces which covered a wide range of expressivity, from the declamatory "Aufschwung" to the lyrical "Ende vom Lied."

The true meat of the concert, however, came after the in-

termission when Richter treated the audience to a performance of Moussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition." I was a little surprised to find this work on the program because it had been played no less than twice this season in Symphony Hall: once by pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy, and again, in Ravel's orchestral version, by the Boston Symphony conducted by Giulini. But I was none the less pleased since I had not heard the piano version in some time. A person used to the more popular Ravel orchestration of the work would have been very surprised to hear it played by Richter.

The opening "Promenade" for example was taken so fast that it took me a minute or so to condition my senses to the fact that I was listening not to the orchestral version, but to the original. Once accustomed, however, the ear was treated to one of the richest and most colorful performances of one of the most brilliant of all program pieces. The "Bydlo" section, for example, which represents the composer's impressions of a drawing of an old Polish ox cart, was particularly impressive in the power and clarity of attack which Richter displayed. "The Hut on Fowl's Legs" was similarly impressive and the noble "Great Gate of Kiev" was gorgeous in the rich sonority which Richter brought to the louder sections and the solemn mysticism evoked by the quieter passages.

The audience, which received Richter only warmly at his entrance was very nearly frantic at the conclusion of the recital and called the pianist back for three encores. I tried to reach Richter after the concert but apparently he had taken the escape hatch out the rear door of Symphony Hall--a fact which seems to support the belief that Richter is not par-

David Letterman

ticularly entranced by the idea of being of being swamped with autograph hunters after performances. Well, perhaps I'll catch him next time and I hope that it will be before five have elapsed (his last Boston recital was in 1965). One does not have the opportunity, especially in Boston, to enjoy musical artistry of so high a caliber very often.

Many music lovers today seem to think that music began with Bach and that everything before Bach was nothing but primitive noise. That's not at all the case as a concert in Agassiz Theater at Radcliffe on January 27th clearly demonstrated. An excellent group of local musicians, all young people, known as the Quadrivium Consort played music of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance in a manner which was enjoyed by many ears unaccustomed to this sound. Most of the music originated from France, England, and Spain and the vocal parts were all sung in the original languages. Whether or not one was enthusiastic about the music, the spirit and precision of execution which these musicians displayed was tremendously impressive. Versatility was the order of the day as each musician was called upon to play a wide variety of instruments including Krummhorns, rauschpeifes, recorders, guitars, and numerous percussion and stringed instruments. Above all, these people really enjoyed performing and communicated to the audience. Concerts such as this remind one that music is to be enjoyed, not only by the audience, but by the musicians as well-- a consideration seemingly overlooked by most professionals today. At present, I am attempting to arrange at UMB by this fine group.

BAG A GRAPEFRUIT

The Lee Nordness Galleries takes pleasure in announcing the United States debut exhibition of a suite of lithographs by John Lennon, entitled BAG ONE, and the celebration for a new book by Yoko Ono, entitled GRAPEFRUIT.

BAG ONE is a series of fourteen lithographs executed by Lennon and depicting scenes, in spontaneous figurative drawings, from the marriage-adventure of the artist and his recent bride, Yoko Ono. Lennon actually began his career as an artist, rather than as musician-composer with THE BEATLES, for which he has achieved his wide recognition. He attended the Art College in England before THE BEATLES began to break attendance records all over the continent and were on their way to becoming the top rock group in the world. Even after his monumental success with the group, Lennon continued his artistic ventures on his own. He also illustrated both of his books, A SPANIARD IN THE WORKS and IN HIS OWN WRITE. After his marriage to Yoko Ono in March of 1969, he began to focus even more attention to the development of his artistic pursuits. BAG ONE marks his formal entry into the art field.

Each lithograph (in editions of 300) is signed and numbered, and the entire set of fourteen comes in a handsome white leather portfolio which the artist designed and had executed in Milan. The words "John Lennon-

BAG ONE' appear in bold-face black lettering on the front of the portfolio. The entire set of prints, including portfolio, will be sold for \$900.00. Individual prints will only be offered for sale at the close of the exhibition, provided the edition is not sold out, for \$100 each. One hundred suites of the lithographs are reserved for the New York debut. BAG ONE is coming to the United States after its formal openings, first in London on January 14, and then in Paris on January 29.

GRAPEFRUIT is Yoko Ono Lennon's first book. It consists of a series of 'events' and 'pieces' written and illustrated by Mrs. Lennon, who has also established her own reputation as an artist in mixed media. The book is being issued in the United States by Simon and Schuster.

A private vernissage for the opening of the exhibition will take place at the Lee Nordness Galleries on February 6, from 9 to 11 p.m. The upstairs galleries will be completely redecorated in honor of the event. Besides covering the gallery floors in plastic, other environmental effects will be added. Mr. & Mrs. Lennon will be present for the opening, which will be by numbered invitation only.

John Lennon: BAG ONE
Yoko Ono: GRAPEFRUIT
February 7, 1970 through
February 26, 1970

university film series

Showings at 7:30

Admission Free

February 11 THE BIG SLEEP (U.S.A., 1946) Howard Hawks with Humphrey Bogart, screen play by William Faulkner.

February 13 CUL DE SAC (England, 1968) Roman Polanski

February 18 BOMBSHELL (U.S.A., 1933) Victor Fleming with Jean Harlow.

February 20 ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS (Italy, 1960) Luchino Visconti

February 25 LIVE FOR LIFE (France, 1968) Claude Lelouch with Yves Montand.

February 27 BROKEN BLOSSOMS (U.S.A., 1919) D.W. Griffith with Richard Barthelmess and Lillian Gish.

March 4 LA RONDE (France, 1950) Max Ophuls.

March 6 CLOSELY WATCHED TRAINS (Czechoslovakia, 1967) Jiri Menzel.

March 11 THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN (U.S.A., 1935) Josef von

Sternberg with Marlene Deitrich.
March 13 SIMON OF THE DESERT (Spain, 1965) Luis Bunuel. THE IMMORTAL STORY (France, 1968) Orson Welles with Orson Welles and Jeanne Moreau.
March 18 STRIKE (Russia, 1924) Directed by Sergei Eisenstein.
March 20 THE CARETAKER (England, 1963) Clive Donner.
April 1 COMEDIES Silent and sound (Chaplin, Keaton, Fields, Laurel and Hardy) and animated cartoons.

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