

Valentine's Day Dance with Crazy 8's

by Rob Waldman

The Crazy 8's are coming back to Eugene for a Valentine's Day dance at Mac Court on the University of Oregon campus. Songs from the band's new album, entitled *Nervous in Suburbia*, will highlight the show along with all the old favorites from their first album, *Law and Order*. The new album has only been out five weeks but sales have exceeded those of their very popular first album. Strong radio support and an active touring schedule are giving the 8's the exposure they need toward national recognition and a major record deal. The 8's, based in Portland, are spending more and more weekends playing gigs away from home in Washington and Canada. In April the band embarks on a national tour that will take them to the east coast where they have already received substantial radio airplay. The Crazy 8's are on the verge of national success, and it won't be long before the rest of the country is dancing to the infectious sounds of Oregon's best kept secret.

The ten new songs on *Nervous in Suburbia* bring familiar sounds to Crazy 8's concert fans. A hot saxophone intro to *Scratch and Claw* opens side one and the 8's are at their danceable best here right through to the feedback-drenched guitar ending.

After one song, there is no doubt that the sound on this record is more sophisticated than that of their previous album. It's

smooth and polished, with more attention to the arrangement of the songs. Horn parts have been well thought out and the interplay between the saxophones and trombone is excellent. Louis Livermore of Portland's Nu Shooz, plays trumpet on *Scratch and Claw* as well as five other songs on the album.

Nervous in Suburbia, the title cut, with its strange, quirky sound, and off-balance horns, is next. You can feel the neurosis that the lyrics describe in modern day suburbia: "Family fights urban sin/ last to know it comes within/ they can flee, they can run/ can't change their story before they're done/ because they're nervous in suburbia." Suburbia comes off as hardly the haven its inhabitants think it is. People jealously guard their postage-stamp parcels of land. The encroaching conformity and monotony of middle class life leaves more victims than benefactors of the shallow suburban dream. This song is begging for a video, let's hope the band does one.

Next is *Goodtime Girl* with its simple, catchy chord changes. It has proved to be one of the 8's most popular in-concert songs and could be the hit from this album. The keyboard intro on this song will be familiar to anyone who has seen the band recently. There is an unexpected bass guitar and then a timbale solo which makes the song lose its straight ahead pop

feel and may cost them airplay. This song, unlike the others on the album, suffers from the experimentation the 8's indulge in.

Side two opens with *Just a Flash*, another potential hit on the record. Here the band's musical diversity is apparent in a jazzy, breezy sound that moves right along. The descending bass line and vocal accompaniment work well together and the guitar work is some of the best on the album. It sounds like *Night and Day* era Joe Jackson. This sound is new for the band and they pull it off beautifully.

Next comes *First Strike*, with its ominous sounding beginning, then the horns punch in and you're into one of the album's most hard-hitting and emotionally charged songs. The lyrics bring home the disbelief and anger we all feel about the escalating nuclear madness: "People are hungry yet we keep on makin'/ useless bombs that'll start me bakin' . . . in a first strike."

Picture on My Wall is the album's least memorable song. The falsetto vocals by lead singer Todd Duncan are too smooth and commercial sounding to fit in with the 8's style. The song is an update on the classic Who song, *Pictures of Lily*, in which a boy falls in love with his fantasy woman in a photograph.

I Lose Control is a blend of reggae, jazz and rock. It features a flute solo by sax player Danny



The Crazy 8's will perform music from their new album "Nervous in Suburbia."

Schauffler. In concert, trombonist Tim Tubbs sings this song but on the record the vocals are done by Todd Duncan. It is a very sweet and melancholy song with a melody that will stay with you long after you've heard it.

The final song is *Rubber Bullets*, featuring Obo Addy, a master drummer from Ghana. This is the most obvious political cut on the album. The song combines a great rhythm with intelligent, well thought out lyrics; and it blends good guitar work by Mark Wanaaka with Obo Addy's superb drumming.

Since the release of their first album, *Law and Order*, the Crazy 8's have clearly done a lot of musical growing. Their song writing has improved, incorporating a larger variety of influences. They

are better players in 1985 than in 1983 when they recorded *Law and Order*. This time around, they've used the studio to their advantage, experimenting and filling out their sound with a lot of texture. *Nervous in Suburbia* is their statement of diversity and maturation.

Doors open at 8:30 pm and the Crazy 8's will play from 9:30 pm to 1 am. Advance tickets are available at Everybody's Records in Eugene and Corvallis, Earth River Records and the EMU Main Desk. Advance tickets are \$4 for U of O students, \$5 for the general public. At the door tickets will cost \$5 for U of O students and \$6 for the general public. The concert is produced by Northwest Concerts and the EMU Cultural Forum.

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