

Record Reviews

By Steve Hoyt

Beat Happening

"Jamboree"

Rough Trade

It seems to be a well kept secret that nestled in the Pacific Northwest are some of the most way hip bands in the land. While such expressions of pop mediocrity as Nu Shooz, Heart and Quarterflash (remember Seafood Mama?) have all put our soggy region on the musical map, the best in the west unfortunately go nearly unnoticed, even by locals. In an effort to thwart this ongoing neglect of our geographic neighbors, we have taken a slice of music from our own backyard.

Beat Happening is one of those bands who you don't have listen to 15 times before you gain any sort of atheistic pleasure from ingesting their music. "Jamboree" is the band's second album and first release on Rough Trade. Hailing from Olympia, Washington, this trio's second album disproves the myth that the state capitol up north is void of any redeeming quality.

"Bewitched", the lead song, is quintessential Beat Happening. Starting out with moderate dose of guitar feedback, the song steams into a powerful distortion guitar riff, then comes the light chest pounding drum beat. Band front person Calvin sings through a man-boy persona, "I see you hangin' there crouched/staring me down/with ice cream cones/till I'm all alone." I never thought such coolness could be heard in less than three

minutes.

Calvin's voice is something to be heard. He seems definitely partial to singing pseudo-dork lines through a rather stodgy voice. The best example of this is on "The This Many Boyfriends Club," recorded live. "Laurie Laurie what's the story/let's go do some apple coring," is juxtaposed against the most absolutely harsh guitar whine one can imagine. Audience members heard screaming with painful ecstasy in the background complete the sacrificial quality of the song.

What really makes this band cool is the music itself. All the songs have a very skeletal musical structure, many with only rhythm guitar and drums. Beat Happening has the ability of building a song around one catchy guitar riff without emitting music that is neither banal or repetitive. It's the essence of simplicity instead of boredom.

The best song on the album, "In Between" is sung by Heather, who plays both bass and guitar. The music is really not that much different from the other songs, it's just a tad better. Her voice has the unique quality of sweetness without being passive or submissive. One of the few disappointments of this album is that Heather sings fewer songs than on their debut LP.

While these folks are far from mainstream, their music (except for such gems as the above "Many Boyfriends Club") is quite accessible. This is the kind

of stuff which is great to do dishes to, dance to in the living room, or to exorcise out the anguish of flunked midterm. Some day these folks are gonna be major label dudes, following in the footsteps of The Replacements, Camper Van Beethoven and Soundgarden. I doubt you'll ever hear these guys at Guido's, which on second thought further attests to how cool this trio is. Even though this vinyl was released in 1988, it still sounds as fresh and sweet as corn right off the stalk. Buy this record.

Beef Steak Projector

"Beef Steak Projector"

Gas Station Inflatables
(available in tape only)

When I first heard the name Beef Steak Projector, I was sure the that the cover of their tape would exceedingly obscene. Instead, it's a fairly literal depiction of their name: a rather juvenile illustration of their name being cast on the screen through a movie projector with a cow standing underneath with its tail connected to the bottom reel of the movie machine. This seems to reflect the not so serious mood of this tape, which is has a mix of good and o.k. tunes.

Beef Steak Projector is from the booming metropolis of the valley: Corvallis, Oregon. Two of the members, guitarist Bert Schoenfeld and bassist Kris McElwee, also write for a no-frills underground rock and roll magazine called "Flaccid." It is available at House of Records for a

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