

The Nylons — always in style

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BY DR. TANTALUS

Hip. Funny. Energetic. Dazzling. Such superlatives seem commonplace when reading reviews of the Nylons performing on record or on stage. Turning acerbic critics into slavish devotees is neither typical nor expected, but then neither are the Nylons.

Performing a capella with occasional

• Music

percussion accompaniment the Nylons style variously has been described from "cabaret" to "rockapella." However, such labels seem too narrow for the Nylons, who span such diverse genres as folk, doo-wop, jazz and rock with consummate ease. Their intricate harmonies transcend each of these musical pigeonholes and transform them into something unique and original.

Formed in Canada, the Nylons are comprised of baritone Marc Connors, tenor Claude Morrison, songwriter Paul Cooper and bass Arnold Robinson, a former Platters member. However, such meager descriptions do not give these members enough credit. Morrison is not merely a tenor but a singer with an amazing falsetto while Robinson's thundering bass anchors the group firmly on the ground. Although they have been performing since 1979, the Nylons remain relatively unknown in the States, though it is said that their 1982 release, *One Size Fits All* went platinum Up North. A 1986 release, *Seamless*, continues their tradition of harmonic treatment of divergent material.

The highlight of *One Size Fits All* (pun intended) is the original "That Kind of Man," which details one man's efforts to retain his integrity in a world where people "change their emotions like they change their clothes." It is also the first direct hint that a particular community is in need of this particular advice since the location of the song occurs partly in a "gay cabaret." The Nylons have also been known to appear on stage with a background of three pink triangles and three lavender triangles. This makes the Doctor suspect that the Well-Connected Rumor, otherwise known as a WCR, that three of the members are gay is correct. (The lifeblood of the



Doctor's practice is undoubtedly the WCR.)

The other song of note on *Size* is "Up the Ladder to the Roof," which is benefited by a rave-up interpretation and seems guaranteed to knock your socks off in concert.

The 1986 release, *Seamless*, is by far the more coherent piece of musical work. Here the boys run the gamut from the Weavers' "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" to Lennon/McCartney's "This Boy" to Carole King's "Up on the Roof" to Eurhythmic's "Take Me to Your Heart," from the obscure "In the Garden" album. (Which the Doctor bought as an import just to be snooty.)

Such a varied diet might leave some performers with a case of musical schizophrenia, but the Nylons seem to possess such a sure sense of style that everything seems readily digestible.

Of course, a cappella groups, percussion backing or not, may not be to everyone's taste. A careful selection of material is a necessity, since such an album can easily sound like a misguided barbershop quartet. (Worse yet, they could sound like the Beastie Boys.) However, given the range of talent displayed on these two albums, that fate seems unlikely. While weak numbers do appear on each record, they are more the exception than the rule.

Any so-called "weakness" is apt to disappear in performance, where stage presence, snappy patter and gorgeous vocals can put across a song. And given the rave reviews of the Nylons' recent tour, it seems likely that such will occur in Portland, where the Nylons are scheduled to appear on April 12th at Starry Night. •



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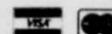


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