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Fran's latest essays snobbish but humorous

By MARK MURRELL Special to the DTH

Fran Lebowitz is an elitist snob.

That quality makes her latest collection of 26 essays and aphorisms in Social Studies all the more appealing. Although there is no humorist who can pull off a masterpiece on every page, Lebowitz, still in her twenties and always poised with a petulent pout, holds her own against such entrenched competitors as Woody Allen. She is ummistakably the Erma Bombeck of the Me generation that young, single and lonely crowd.

review

A militant smoker though a political conservative, Lebowitz is a loner, observing her world with an unpitying eye that zooms in on inconsistency.

The good thing about Lebowitz is that she realizes the negative qualities which have made her famous and she offers no apologies for them. "I've never had anywhere near the amount of money to justify my snobbery," she confessed recently. "It's innate."

This book, her first after the best-seller of three years ago, Metropolitan Life, contains Fran's observations on people, things, places and ideas - most of which she discusses with a humorously arrogant scorn.

She offers many words of wisdom: "Polite conversation is rarely either." "Spilling your guts is just exactly as charming as it

sounds." She is also quick to guide parents, teens, pet lovers and travelers on the dos and don'ts of life.

Consider her advice for parents: "Educational television should be absolutely forbidden. It can only lead to unreasonable expectations and eventual disappointment when your child discovers that the letters of the alphabet do not leap up out of books and dance around the room with royal blue chickens."

Or this tip for teens: "If movies (or films, as you are probably now referring to them) were of such a high and serious nature, can you possibly entertain even the slightest notion that they would show them in a place that sold Orange Crush and Jujubes?"

There are other longer pieces in Lebowitz's book. Many deal with Catholic humor, the trials of being a writer and Lebowitz's vow never to be poor again after leaving her one-room apartment with its Kord twoburner hotplate.

The author may have concocted the perfect remedy to poverty. If she continues to write best-sellers every three years that are only 150 pages long, sell for \$10 and have selections that simultaneously appear in Interview and Newsweek, Lebowitz will soon have enough money and fame to justify all the snobbery she can muster. This, of course, is her definition of success.

Fran Lebowitz is irreverent to humanity and is funniest at those times when she is most cruel. This book is full of hilarious moments that inspire guilt in a reader who sees the humor. Some are sure to trigger a good deal of hate mail for Fran.

A typical passage from Lebowitz - an avowed hater of pets: "Even if dogs should be withheld from the frivolous, there would still be the blind and pathologically lonely to think of. I am not totally devoid of compassion, and after much thought I believe I have hit upon the perfect solution to this problem: let the lonely lead the blind."

Please address your letters of outrage to Fran Lobowitz c/o Random House, not to me.

But don't expect an answer. That's the beauty of this writer. She really doesn't care if she offends you on one page if she can make you laugh on another. She seeks to outrage.

She shows little sympathy for New Yorkers, Catholics, the poor, parents, Californians, teenagers, children, pets, servants, her aunt, her own kitchen appliances, directory assistance operators, people with handicaps or those of varying sexual persuasions.

However, it's hard to picture Lebowitz bent double over her typewriter in derisive laughter. In the tradition of the best humorists, she does not seem to laugh at her best line, but rather delivers them with that unabashed, dead-pan precociousness that says "In this business unless you have a sense of humor you're dead."

By ED LEITCH **DTH Staff Writer**

'Freetime' succeeds as

joyful jazz fusion album

Composing successful jazz, or what might be more accurately called jazz fusion, is a long and tedious process. A band can't rely upon the charisma of a lead singer or the structure of a song (a power-chord here, a primal scream there ...) to maneuver a weak number through the rough spots.

records

In jazz fusion, a loose framework is constructed in the opening moments of a song, and the musicians exploit it for all it's worth, knowing their success depends upon the degree of skill and creativity they display within the scheme.

Fusion jazz musicians need techincal proficiency and creativity surpassing the run-of-the-mill recording artist to make it work; consequently, it takes more than a casual listen to determine the degree to which an album succeeds.

Freetime, Spyro Gyra's latest release, succeeds. It'll wear you out to listen to it - there's so damn much going on.

The performers take more than pride in their work; they express a joy that surfaces throughout the production. Guitarist John Tropea wrings note after reluctant note out of his instrument as if it were a sponge containing musical paint to be dabbed all around whenever a number needs some coloring. And he doesn't miss a note, either.

Even if you aren't particularly thrilled with where a song is going at first Spyro Gyra will change keys or make some incredibly slick move and bring you around to their way of thinking.

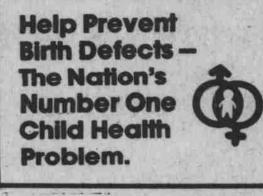
Bass guitarist Will Lee and keyboards magician Tom Schumann run musical of breaking it off. It's an impressive composite.

This album could have been a miserable failure. It has all the ingredients in ample portions: complicated rhythms, "Elegy for Trane" recorded with no drums, and the individual input and creative temperaments of all the performers bashing together (five writers on seven songs), But probably the most important thing is that it requires the audience to sit down, put everything else aside and really concentrate for about an hour to appreciate it.

If you just want to relax or you think Boston's first album is the greatest music composed since Peter Frampton died (whadya mean he's not dead?) then maybe you ought to pass on Freetime. Otherwise, give it and Spyro Gyra some ong and careful attention.

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Debra DeMilo, vocalist with the Raleigh-based 'Fabulous Knobs' informs me that the band's long-awaited sequel to their first album will be out sometime in November and will contain seven tracks this time around. 'Knobs' fans, take heed and save up your lunch money for this one. Bass guitarist Jack Cornell tells me they've gotten even better.



* * * * * CAROLINA SPORTS

'Romeo and Juliet,' dramatic success

By JEFF GROVE DTH Staff Writer

The Paul Green Theatre was transformed into the streets of old Verona Wednesday night as the UNC Department of Dramatic Art presented Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare's early tragedy is notoriously difficult to stage because audiences have many preconceived notions, but this production racks up more plusses than minuses.

book

The ill-fated lovers, who challenge the feud between their families and pay with their lives, are played by Laura Sumner and Nicholas Searcy. Sumner creates a woman. Searcy makes a less forceful impression as Romeo. He gives a capable during his scenes, but the sight of his outstretched hands soon becomes monotonous.

The comic stars of the show are Becky Lillie as the lusty, devoted nurse and Kevin Coffey as Sampson, a servant with a talent for stealing a scene by falling asleep on his feet.

Glenn Roark, a bit young for the role of Friar Lawrence, makes the character affable and at times, moving. Mercutio, as played by Carl Espy, seems somehow off the mark, but has a field day with the famous "Queen Mab" speech. George Kaperonis is a fiery, noble Tybalt. John Rowell has some trouble getting Paris' role started but gives a powerful portrayal in the play's latter half. And Warren Hartwell as Prince Escalus and Leslie Meeds as Lady Capulet also give excellent

more realistic characters.

The lighting design by Tom Johns is atmospheric and creative, isolating the part of the stage being used and then enhancing it. Rick Brown's costumes comment on the characters without being obtrusive. And the fight scenes, staged by John Roth, are exciting, and Kate Hunter's choreography is simple but elegant.

Tom Rezzuto's set, a modern variation of the basic playing area used in Shakespeare's day, effectively evokes an Italianate mood. And Rezzuto's direction of the actors sometimes seems too perfunctory but satisfies in the long run. If there is a problem with his basic concept, it is that he seems to view the story as being only about Romeo and Juliet antl not about the Montague-Capulet rivalry.

"Sweetback" is realistic

Hollywood was mostly deaf to the turbulent years of the 1960s. Instead of realistically examining such political problems as racism and the war in Vietnam, what was generally offered up were bland and inoffensive works like Guess Who's Coming to Dinner and The Green Berets. But there were exceptions like

Melvin Van Peebles' uncompromising film Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song, one of the few cinematic portravals of black rage.

Sweetback is the story of a pimp who kills two policemen and then goes on a murderous rampage. It is as controversial today as it was when released a decade ago. The film isn't a pretty one - the portrayal of violence and sex are disturbingly realistic - yet it needs to be seen even if just as a reminder of what the times were like.

periormances.

But unfortunately all the cast members

Romeo and Juliet continues at 8 p.m.

mother to bear his son.

Evans looks up all his female acquaint-



