

Albums view real life from each side of the Atlantic



The duet House of Freaks hails from Richmond, Va.

If you really want to know what latest trends people are talking about, the newspapers probably aren't the source. I hate to say it, but Phil and Oprah probably rank right up there as the epitome of the latest cocktail chitchat. Like this Elvis Presley thing. Everyone talked about it: Is he really alive? Well, who really cares?

I certainly wouldn't want to see a man of his condition, dead or alive, gyrating and swinging his fabled pelvis. And the world doesn't need any more of his B-movies because, after all, the world barely survived the productions of Ronnie Reagan during the last eight years.

So face the facts, get a grip on reality: Elvis is dead. But *Queen Elvis* is alive and well and living in your local record store. *Queen Elvis* is the fourth and most recent LP from England's Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians. The group is one of the opening bands on R.E.M.'s current tour, and this album features additional guitar work from R.E.M.'s Peter Buck on four tracks.

If I were to name bands from the last decade that played a big influence on the shape of today's pop music, the Soft Boys probably rank up somewhere with Big Star and the

Julie Olson Albums

Velvet Underground. Well, all right, that might be a bit of an exaggeration.

But the Soft Boys were formed in 1976 by Hitchcock and the two other members of the Egyptians, Andy Metcalfe and Morris Windsor, and were then playing their unique blend of post-punk pop that remains in their current lineup. The only thing is that during 1976 the British punk movement was barely underway. The music world wasn't ready for post-punk before it had been hit by punk, and the Soft Boys literally marched to their own drumbeat.

The Egyptians, however, are a little more accessible than the Soft Boys ever were. Changing tastes probably play a part, but the Egyptians also have a much less harsh sound than that of the Soft Boys. *Queen Elvis* is a mid-tempo pop record, with catchy little melodies and that unmistakably hypnotic Hitchcockian voice. But though pleasant and accessible, it's certainly not Top 40; the harshness may be gone but the attitude

remains. Whitney Houston would probably never sing a song about "The Veins of the Queen," but these college radio faves have no qualms whatsoever.

The album is also eclectic but not disjointed. "The Devil's Coachmen" uses a full string quartet with a spacey, plunky sound but that same quartet, with an acoustic guitar, is also used on "Wax Doll," with a much slower effect. The song "Swirling" is a beautiful, almost love song with dreamy melodies and lyrics.

But the song "One Long Pair of Eyes" is definitely the single: The danceable melody but especially the obscure lyrics sum up the style of Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians: "You turn me on like light/ A liquid silver light/ That emanates inside of you, decorates the room around and/ Just before the curtains part for dawn/ And everything's gone/ She had one long pair of eyes."

Jumping across the Atlantic and landing smack dab in the middle of Americana, Richmond's own House of Freaks just released its second album on Rhino Records, *Tamilla*.

This much acclaimed duo escapes musical generalization: Rock, yes,

pop, yes, but who cares? Sounding somewhat similar to that Southern regional sound made famous by R.E.M. and other times sounding like those pop preachers the Alarm, the House of Freaks still has its own distinct sound — a much more spare and minimal one, which may be because there are only two members in the band.

The album is predominantly the vocals of singer/guitarist Bryan Harvey, rounded out by the steady beat of drummer/percussionist Johnny Hott. From the upbeat of the prereleased single "Sun Gone Down" to the country-influenced "Big Houses" to the slow and haunting "Broken Bones," the album has a general feel of roughness.

Produced by John Leckie, who has done work with such different groups as XTC and Let's Active, the true sound of House of Freaks shines through on the album without the filmy glaze of studio over-production. House of Freaks sing songs about common experience — death, love, history and future — but without sounding self-righteous or corny. Real life, not chitchat, but hey, we've got Phil and Oprah for that.

Line up for PlayMakers' 1989-90 lineup of classics, new plays

By JESSICA YATES
Staff Writer

You may not run into Anton Chekhov, Harold Pinter and William Shakespeare on campus every day. But beginning next year you can catch them on stage at the Paul Green Theatre.

Season tickets for PlayMakers Repertory Company's 1989-90 season, which will include plays by Chekhov, Pinter and Shakespeare, go on sale March 28 at the Paul Green Theatre box office.

Chekhov's comedy "The Cherry Orchard" will be the season opener. First produced in 1904, the play is a modern sketch of the Soviet Union, and will be performed Sept. 13 through Oct. 8.

The next production is "Old Times," a contemporary drama by Britain's Pinter. This play, which will run Oct. 25 through Nov. 12, tells the story of a husband, wife and friend who at dinner one evening are confronted with doubts and fears from their pasts (as ghosts).

What is usually considered a classic ballet is next in the lineup for PlayMakers' season. "The Nutcracker: A Play for Christmas," based on the 19th-century fairy tales by E.T.A. Hoffman, will be performed Nov. 29 through Dec. 23.

Shakespeare's "Love's Labour's Lost," will be staged Jan. 31 through Feb. 18.

Next on the program is the story of the rivalry of two brothers and their struggle to achieve conflicting goals. "True West," by American

playwright Sam Shephard, will be performed March 7 through March 25.

The last play of the season, "The Rivals," will be presented April 18 through May 13. Written by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, this British comedy will make a timely showing, as it features the themes of love and aging set in the springtime of 18th-century Bath.

The 1989-90 season includes 30 more performances than were originally scheduled, according to PRC

executive producer Milly Barranger. Tuesday evening performances will be continued, as well as the periodic discussion sessions of the plays. "The audience discussions following the second Wednesday performance of each production continue to be popular with classes and instructors," she said.

PlayMakers' artistic director David Hammond will celebrate his fifth season with the company in 1989-90. PlayMakers is a full-season, professional company and is a pro-

gram of UNC's Department of Dramatic Art. The group holds its performances in the Paul Green Theatre and operates as non-profit theater.

The company will hold auditions for professional actors May 27 and 28. Interested actors should call 962-1132 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. to schedule an appointment. Each actor must have prepared one selection by Shakespeare and one modern selection, which in sum can not exceed five minutes. The deadline to arrange for an audition is May 20 at 4 p.m.

The prices for season subscriptions are as follows: \$55 for preview Wednesdays and Fridays; \$65.50 for other Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays; \$78.50 for Fridays and Saturdays; and \$95 for opening night galas.

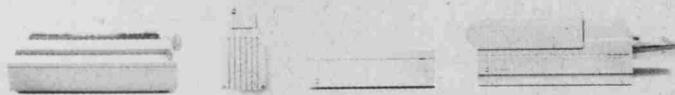
Single tickets are \$7 for Tuesdays, a general admission seating night with no subscriptions available. Other single ticket prices go as follows: \$12.50 for preview Wednesdays and Fridays; \$15 for other Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays; \$17.50 for Fridays and Saturdays; and \$25 for opening night galas.

An "Incredible Student Pass" admits students to all six plays for \$45. Other discounts apply for senior citizens, children under 16 and groups. For more ticket information, call 962-1121.

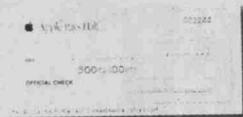
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