

V.A.T. Stepping Off The Edge

By Grant Shilling

THE speech of the heart is often inarticulate. Rather than flowing in an easily constructed statement it is subject to the force of emotion. Free jazz is a musical acknowledgement of that fact. Ornette Coleman in his album **Something Else!** pioneered expression in this idiom. The music of the Vancouver Art Trio (appearing November 22 at the Centre Culturel Columbien, 795 West 16th) pursues expression in that tradition.

"I want to say something that transcends mediocrity. A sense of stepping beyond my inhibition. Playing from the heart sounds corny but I really mean it. This often manifests itself in harsh, intense, and often sad expres-

sions but the result is positive. Uplifting is that combination." The speaker is Bruce Freedman, saxophonist for V.A.T.

Freedman in conversation communicates with the same honesty found in his music. On the experimental nature of his music Freedman suggests, "Who knows, maybe nobody will like it!"

Completing the trio are Clyde Reed on bass and Greg Simpson on drums. Simpson, a drumming tour de force, has been part of the Vancouver jazz scene for some time. Along with Reed he played in the New Orchestra Workshop in the late 70's, and again with Reed in Paul Plimley's band Motion. Freedman is best known for co-founding Rio Bumba, a latin flavoured jazz band with Albert St. Albert. Being veterans of the Vancouver

jazz scene however does not insure regular employment. All hold down full time jobs. Simpson is an artist, Freedman works with handicapped children, and Reed is a professor at S.F.U.

Such is the nature of being a jazz musician: if you want to get rich at it, get your head examined. The richness lies in the music. This is the attraction for these musicians, a chance to explore the depth of an emotion.

"Music is stepping off the edge," says Freedman. "In our music the emphasis is an organic improvisation as a group. It is very free. Often I don't know if I'm following Clyde or he's following me. I'm not sure it matters."

The idea of musical statements which suggest and explore human feelings no matter how painful or naked is often difficult to digest. In-

novators in this field (Coleman, Cecil Taylor, some Coltrane) were not readily accepted. This is introspective music that requires an openness. But the rewards are there. Coleman put it best: "When I have my group working together it's like a beautiful kaleidoscope. The most important thing that I think of, as far as trying to keep in the music world, the music business, is doing things that stimulate other people to investigate how they can enjoy what you do. And that's the hardest part — how does someone discover they enjoy what you do?" The fact that V.A.T. is posing the same question thirty years after the birth of free jazz indicates it is a question worth asking. ■

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