

## The albums and films.

The Billy Nayer Show first came together in 1989, with McAbee, drummer Bobby Lurie, guitarist Yuri Weber Gragonovitch and bassist Lee Vilensky. With material (written by McAbee) which alternately mixed light whimsy with the dark, bitter truths of relationships & human nature, coupled with their stage presence (their live shows leaned more towards cabaret, aided by McAbee's stage persona - a combination of the suave cool of a Vegas lounge veteran & the manic desperation of a man on the edge of a psychotic meltdown), the band quickly gained notoriety in the Bay Area and gained a strong cult following. Their first project of note was providing musical backing for McAbee's first short, BILLY NAYER - a 2 1/2 minute rotoscoped mini-musical that makes ample use of McAbee's persona. The band also released a three song CD single in 1990, MEET THE BUNNY KING. then followed it in 1993 with the release of a six song cassette, MARRIED TO THE SEA.

THE MAN ON THE MOON and THE KETCHUP AND MUSTARD MAN were the next two shorts - MAN ON THE MOON (1992) is an extremely low-budget (shot on Pixelvision), non special-effects tilled tale of a man who, after his girlfriend leaves him for another man, goes to live on the moon, which is "a lonely town" Consisting of



The Billy Nayer Show, current lineup - clockwise from top: Cory McAbee, Michael Silverman, Bobby Lurie, James Beaudreau.

broadcasts he makes to Earth which detail his year spent dealing with the breakup. it features two songs; "Must Be Santa" and "Baby" (the latter sung with Buck Naked AKA Hector Bury, a friend and popular Bay Area musician who was tragically murdered in 1994), and is an interesting precursor to THE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT, in that it shares the same aesthetic (no futuristic stylings, black & white photography).

THE KETCHUP AND MUSTARD MAN (1994) is a visual representation of a performance piece - intercut with shots of McAbee ranting "a story about a little princess" with the band and the titular character (McAbee in an extremely grotesque makeup) and musical numbers moving the story along. Very weird somewhat nightmarish at times and

strangely arresting - the highlight is a scene of the band performing "Seven" in a nightclub full of disinterested and surly patrons

The shorts were collected together into a film presentation/live performance called THE BILLY NAYER CHRONICLES, which the band performed at various venues (theatres, museums and nightclubs), and are also available on VHS.

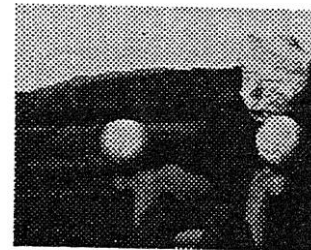
The band's first release on disc, the eponymous THE BILLY NAYER SHOW introduces the slightly skewed universe of Cory McAbee. Think of Oingo Boingo & Frank Zappa combining forces and taking on Vegas as a lounge act, and you get a

pretty good idea of the tone. The collection includes songs from McAbee's films, plus earlier singles and other material; it's less cohesive as an album. That doesn't detract from the quality of the songs, with influences ranging from Frank Zappa, Leonard Cohen to Carl Stalling; in addition to tainted love songs, such as 'Baby'; 'Liar', and 'Pitchfork', McAbee does demonstrate a softer touch with "Dogs" and "Apartment #5" - then there's the weirdness of songs such as 'The Bunny King': 'Weasel Heart' and 'Bouncy Bouncy'.

Released at about the same time was the soundtrack for THE KETCHUP AND MUSTARD MAN. For being a soundtrack recording, it stands very well on its own - actually, it probably functions better as a radio show

since one's imagination isn't on a budget. There's quite a selection of twisted little nuggets of song, along with the equally twisted storyline that the Narrator/McAbee attempts to tell: "Fickey", "Mary", "Seven", "Chicken Story" and "Ham", a Monty Pythonesque sing-along that was an audience favorite at their live shows.

The band began to tour the West & East Coasts and did



The Ketchup and Mustard Man

perform at the Sundance Film Festival with the program of films. The line-up also changed, with guitarist {Randall Ahmann} replacing Gragonovitch. The band mainly performed live, as McAbee began developing AMERICAN ASTRONAUT, although there was a 7" release on Weasel Disc of 'Must Be Santa' b/w "Theme from 'The Inquisitor'" (an animation project that was eventually discontinued).

1998 saw the release of the band's third album, THE 'IL LAIN THAT LOVE BUILT, the band now comprised of McAbee and Lurie, with a bevy of sidemen such as Marc Ribot, Geoff Pearlman, James

Beaudreau, Matt Cow". among others The album isn't as guitar heavy as most of the previous albums: the leading instruments are autoharp & ukelele. One thing that did change is the warped mix of whimsy & bitterness - 'Villain' is almost a conceptual album (the original title being RUN, COWARD, RUN), with various songs such as 'The Way She Dances': 'The Closer She Gets', 'Sunshine All The Time' and "Larry" reflecting the jaundiced outlook of the 'Villain' of the title. There is a spoken word piece with autoharp accompaniment, the evil twist on Beatrix Potter, 'Mr. Satan Butterwolf' (a favorite from live performances), that starts off the album and sets the tone.

Also included is a song featured in AMERICAN ASTRONAUT, "The Girl With the Vagina Made of Glass", and a fun ditty on the life of Christ "Christ" (well, what would YOU call it) that ends with Jesus rolling his truck (!) and emerging unscathed from the wreckage.

In 1999, guitarist James Beaudreau and bassist Michael Silverman joined up to restore the group to a four-piece for the fourth album, RETURN TO BRIGADOON. This is the first album where songwriting duties are shared along with other members - there's still the slightly off center and sharp humor ("ABC", a caustic alphabet of breakup & betrayal; "Only I Can Save The World"; and the experimental fable of "The Crow.

The Cat, The Snake and The Tree"). but it's slightly tempered by tenderness ("Return To Brigadoon", "Everyday I Dream" 2001 saw the release of THE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT, the feature length musical film McAbee wrote, directed and starred in - it had its premiere at Sundance. The "semi-autobio-



graphical space Western" concerns the adventures of an intergalactic trader, Samuel Curtis (McAbee) who is pursued by his arch nemesis, Professor Hess (Rocco Sisto). While that boils down the story to its bare essentials, you can be sure that does not follow the usual pattern of such genre films.

Following screenings in several festivals and in July, '00, got a distribution deal, so it should be playing in major markets and perhaps your nearest at house during the latter part of the year.