

Modern Lovers: Did You Come?

BY JERRY LEICHTLING

Open the Lampoon and find the prophylactic ads or the mail order "How To Get Laid" and meditate for a moment on the equivalency relationship of "laughing to keep from crying" and taking a shower with a raincoat on. Set it to some sad rock 'n roll. Now I ask you very confidentially, did you come?

Jonathan Richmond, *the Modern Lover*, is gifted, frustrated, and slightly delirious. Like Rody McDowall in "Lord Love A Duck," he's fitful, misanthropic, and covered with heartache from chasing



Abner Symons

Modern lover Jonathan Richmond poses plaintively

Tuesday Weld. But he's a poet, a very beautiful "Sally Go Round the Roses" strange poet. He comes out, barefoot on the floor of The Kitchen loft space, and illustrates rock 'n' roll with a cheap Japanese guitar and Mick Jagger twist-o-flox body parodies, playing off the most bitter-sweet, whimsical, and graceful lyrics around. This guy really pierces loneliness.

The group, such as it is, is from Boston and over the last couple of years has garnered a grand reputation, especially in New England and out in Berkeley. They've cut two albums for Warners, but neither has been released. Richmond is as much a visual treat as a musical one and the problems involved in capturing the feeling on record are very apparent. The group plays a thin, hyperventilated rock, with acoustic guitars no less. Or this latest outfit does. The previous band was more of a real band, rather than the wimpy

the
Kitchen
center for video and music

Village Voice

March 25 1975

Greek chorus that protagonist Richmond uses now. People who've seen them before tell me that the fuller music of the past acted as a better balance, lending more real irony than the present less-is-more minimalist greed.

But no matter really. Richmond sings, "Here we are in dreamland, look there's your girlfriend, she's so pretty over there by the swans." Who can argue with swans? Like the very best, he can create his own world uniquely. Looking like a straight teenage guru, a part he plays to the hilt, he floated ("I am just a bubble, make me a sea") through the show.

And the love songs were true and to the point: "One of these days she'll need your awkward love." or his aching reprise to the Beatles' "With a Little Help From My Friends," where "maybe someday we'll really talk, I feel a lot of electricity but I guess I'd have to say I'm sad."

I heard a few remarks that he's too facile, false. Maybe, but he might be a genius. A pathological Mozart is better than none. Or at worst a manipulative Ray Davies. We shall see, modern lovers, we shall see. □