

POLES APART

"If anyone asks you what I'm doing here, just tell them I'm painting electromagnetic fields of energy."

— Michaele Jordana in concert.

A song about physical submission to the CN Tower is a single being broadcast in New York. A feminist Lord of the Flies (a suburban cookout for young cannibals) is a highlight of an upcoming album debut.

Promising! Promising! Coming up and becoming in from the down-and-out of Toronto's new wave is a band called the Poles.

I'll see them for the first time tomorrow night when they do a showcase upstairs at the El Mocambo. But I've heard about them, read of them, listened to them and talked with them.

The music is a tightly repressed scream over meticulously even rabbit-punch rhythms. A chord change comes along like a cold strawberry milkshake on a desert safari.

The lyrics have an opaque frenzy. Dogged dog-eared doggerel revved up to the level of devotion/commotion/emotion.

The combination can be a trance.

Founder-composer Doug Pringle knows about trances. He played with Syrinx, Canada's most popular meditation-makers.

Inspiration-lyricist Michaele Jordana is entrancing. She's a professional painter and photographer of some success and more controversy (banned in Brampton!). Her only musical experience before the Poles was classical piano (to Grade 12).

Like Samuel Beckett, who chose to write in a language in which he was not fluent, Doug and Michaele are using instruments on which they are not proficient. He plays synthesizer — simply. She uses her voice — emotionally, instinctively. "I try to steer it, but not to do something unnatural to me," she told me. "We're going back to gospel where people were free within their own vocals."

He watches, thinks, controls. She erupts. "Something is coming through me," she says. "When it's in me it causes me to do certain things — it's sort of Shamanistic." (Among primitive peoples, a shaman is a magician, medium or healer.) "I think shamans were the original artists."

In the tension between these poles comes the band. Ricky Swede on guitar, Stevie Goode on bass, Rex Chainbelt on drums. Three young lads

WILDER PENFIELD III



21 to 23 from suburban bands on the Northern Ontario bar circuit. They didn't know from nothing about new wave . . . until they joined the team. "It took them about 14 hours to become punks," says Doug.

New-wave music, as they see it, is a tribal experience. "Most artistry involves a meeting between individual and individual; this is the meeting of collective with collective." Michaele says it another way: "We're a total animal created out of electronics and human integrity. The audience is a gang, and we are a part of them, and they are a part of us."

"The Poles are the beasts responding to Michaele, and the audience becomes part of the primal howl," it says in a feature in *New York Rocker*. "The last 10 minutes of the show must be seen to be believed. In an electronic duel (male/female molecular clash), Jordana and Pringle literally blast apart the airwaves in the room with synthesizer guns, spewing invisible rays of atom-smashing pulse."

The source of the name is neither the guns nor their lean looks nor their opposite approaches but, yes, the Poles themselves — particularly the North Pole. Michaele was taking pictures up there, and they shared a mystical experience of isolation and primitive power.

The music was born. And much of what they do now refers back to that rebirth. "When I perform I do things I was taught not to do," says Michaele, "but it's innocent like it is at the North Pole. Innocent because what you're exhibiting is pure feelings."

"Art has powers to conjure up a lot of feelings. They can be violent, but I find violence weakens me. Hopefully our feelings will continue to be positive."

Their show was inspired partly by David Byrne of Talking Heads. "I loved his voice," she says now. "I couldn't hear the words, but what I felt was hope."

"That's the most important aspect of our music too — to make people feel."

