

The Spectator

Visitor from another planet



It didn't take purple hair or space necklaces to convince Michaela she was different

THE EYES, those cat-like almond discs, are the centre of Michaela Jordana's universe.

She uses them as a surgeon might use a scalpel, dissecting you with a masterful visual stroke. She uses them to try to disarm you, to make you a believer of her out-of-this-worldly visions.

Her worlds, both real and fantasy, contain none of the commonplace, everyday occurrences the rest of us know. Jordana, the 29 year-old new wave rock princess with the purple hair, is above and beyond normality. She's an oddity in a business filled with oddities. Always has been, always will be.

From the top of her carefully tousled hair to the tip of her Beatle-booted toes, Jordana radiates a human surrealism. The heavy eye make-up; the "soft, woolly, cuddly, fuzzy, pink dayglo, beaded gauze" sweater; the black, wetlook pants and "space" jacket; the black, clutch vinyl bag; the "space" tubes around her neck and arms and the "space" triangles on her T-shirt.

"I'm sure I came from space," she says in a teasingly serious tone. "Right now, I'd have to say from Venus or Mars. My spirit is definitely a slave to the universe."

JORDANA ALWAYS talks like that. She can't help it, so she says.

It's not a gimmicky stunt, she claims, designed to ingratiate herself with the rock audience. She's always felt and acted this way.

Sitting wide-eyed at a table in a decidedly down-to-earth Hamilton steak house, Jordana is miles and years away from Winnipeg, the place where introverted Michaela Berman first realized she was different.

"I'm still shy today, but then I was totally afraid of people. I'd hide under the table whenever anyone came to visit. I developed an incredible fantasy life. Images started rolling in my brain and I'd spend hours looking into the mirror."

She says her parents — her mother was a concert pianist and her father a travelling salesman ("entrepreneur") — weren't tuned into her wavelength. "Nobody understood me. Nobody."

Even then, she stuck out in a crowd. "I was never one of the gang. I was always sort of a personality to be dealt with. People followed me and as soon as they followed, I lost interest."

Shaking with nervous energy, the tall and slender singer describes how she struggles within herself, how she responds to the visions she's always had. After graduating from the Manitoba School of Art, she wandered to Toronto where she met up with Doug Pringle ("he's my soulmate, my inspiration and the genius behind me").

Pringle is also the synthesizer player and business head for the Poles, the band that fronts Jordana. Together, they went to the North Pole — she financed by money from a painting she did and he by a Canada Council grant — and spent three months "hanging out on the ice floes" on the northern tip of Baffin Island.

TO MICHAELE, the summer season of 24-hour sunlight and the barren surroundings was like "being on Saturn. We were drifting, hunting, feeling and being primitive. Messages from space were all around."

Preoccupied with the north to the point of obsession, Jordana returned to Toronto and painted an 8 foot by 16 foot canvas (called I Cried Tears Of Blood For The Power Man Wields On The Hierarchy Of Being) which she has since sold to the National Gallery of Canada for \$7,000. She carried the obsession another step by performing in *The Rites Of Nulijuk*, a work dedicated to the Inuit spirit of the waters.

Soon the Poles (get the connection) were formed and they recorded the punk classic, *CN Tower*. They took their show to New York where they played CBGB's and where Jordana got to know John Cale. But they split up for a while and only regrouped recently to begin touring with their new album, *Romance At The Roxy*.

"We're only going to go to places where we'll be accepted," she said. "We'll go to New York and perhaps Europe. I'm out for a good time and I'm out to make money. I'm aiming for the masses, at the kids and romance."

"I'm a romantic. I'm into sense, smells, fragrances. Soft clothes, silk and leather. Eye contact and nice dinners."

JORDANA BECOMES more and more agitated as she tries to explain herself. She's due on stage at Bannister's within the hour and she still has to get dressed and make herself up.

She's trying to make some cohesive sense, but her attempts are in vain. "I can't define myself. That's what keeps me alive. Not having to define it. The eyes, The Look. That's why I guess I'm drawn to Theda Bara."

She changes the subject. "How do you like my sweater? I've always dressed like this. It's becoming sheik now, so people are starting to realize I have style. That's my fun. I make my own style and people follow it."

"I'm going on my own inner strengths. When I was younger my face wasn't as refined. I think as I go on I get stronger. Records, movies, it doesn't matter. I'm for real. I'm old enough to know what I'm doing and I'm young enough to do it."



Michaela Jordana is a new wave rock queen, but she doesn't pamper to the whims of the new wave crowd.