

OZZIE'S OPERA

by Martin Cohen

Ozzie; a local area rock group, performed their rock-opera **Berlin 1990** the other night to a packed crowd at Slick Willy's. It was all part of the continuing celebration for KZAP's 10th year on the air and it was an interesting evening to say the least.

If you haven't heard Ozzie before — there's a heavy-rock sound with booming bass, thundering drums, sizzling electric lead, keyboards, rhythm guitar — a science-fiction bombardment of sound that captures the attention. At times they are overwhelming and driving, at times a bit more pensive and lyrical but it's a sensory experience as much as a musical one — you must be prepared for their large doses of heavy music with equally heavy themes. It is loud, brash and alive.

The members of the group include: Bill Fuller, keyboard and synthesizer specialist; Happy Jack Hastings, the Big Bassman; Spencer Sparrow, rhythm guitar and feathers; Mr. Ozone, electrifying lead and Armando Vasquela on drums and more drums. They form a unique group working together to create their music in

an open spontaneous manner drawing on each other's style and sensibilities to mold ideas into songs. They have been playing together for several years doing mostly local gigs and they have also put out a 45 rpm record under their own label (Make Me Records) covering their original tunes **Android Love** and **Organic Gardening**. They tell me sales are booming in the "esoteric" community.

As I've said, Ozzie is a rock experience, music with drama, and on this night they attempted to bring that all together into a theatrical, cohesive form with their opera **Berlin 1990**. They showed a combustible energy on stage dancing and prancing about almost like robots lavishly supported by consistent rhythms — the lyrics, however, though somewhat inventive and penetrating, got lost in most of the numbers.

But the attempt to tie their songs together in such a format was admirable even if the theme was questionable. Supposed to portray the last bastion of freedom in a deteriorating world (Berlin), the narrative opens: "The world was crumbling into ruin. The terrorist nuclear device that obliterated the first and last of the deep-space inhabitants was the match igniting the overpopulated and impoverished Earth to flame. It was the signal for the collapse of corporate and industrial power and of the governments maintained by it. All of the nations of the world were plunged into the chaos of riot and revolution as they struggled blindly to maintain

a now impossible status quo. Eventually realizing that they were indeed witnessing the death throes of technocratic society, the leaders concluded that they must destroy what they no longer could control . . . in all the black and bloody world there was but one small place that did not stink of the corruption of death . . . Berlin." But the symbols used and the incantations of some of the music reminded one of a less pleasant time when fascism swallowed up Europe destroying in its path people and institutions for a "greater goal." If the theme of the opera was freedom, which was the one intended, it used poor symbols and methodology to make the point — the arm bands of the ushers, the raising of the beer bottles to "power and glory" might have intended to be salutes to freedom but the result was too reminiscent of uglier times — how many people at the club that night interpreted the theme of the opera for what was intended rather than latch onto convenient symbols and slogans without letting the theme penetrate a little deeper? Still, a lot of work by many people went into this production and their creative efforts should be recognized.

Despite the problems noted above, Ozzie is a group worth listening to. They are inventive, creative and unusual. What they need to do is focus in on focusing out — there is a world out there that wants to hear music that relates to everyday life.