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NEWSPAPER

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSWEEKLY OF MUSIC, VIDEO AND HOME ENTERTAINMENT

AUGUST 24, 2002

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by Larry Flick



FEELING THE BURN: Andy Northrup is the kind of artist who sneaks up on you with his music. He grabs you from behind, just when you think you're listening to another dime-a-dozen folkie weaving the same ol' familiar tales.

That's the ultimate pleasure of the music that fills Northrup's sterling debut, *Slow Burn Avenue*; its songs initially deceive the listener with a smooth, seemingly simplistic surface. But once you investigate the material closer, you realize that the singer/songwriter is smarter than your average guitar-toting troubadour. His lyric construction is palpably

sophisticated, though he also infuses an earthy, I've-lived-every-word sincerity. He's particularly effective on the radio-ready title cut, which unfolds like a heartbreaking, wholly relatable audio movie.

"It's about being in a place where you're watching life go by," he says. "You're enduring life as opposed to enjoying it. The toughest decision is to change that complacency."

"Slow Burn Avenue" is only one of 11 songs that takes personal ideas and experiences and casts them in a framework that enables the listener to climb inside and make each tune his own. Particularly strong is the plaintive "Peace of Mind" and "The Moment That You Know," which deftly combines jangly rock elements with a surprisingly effective Motownesque beat.

Part of what clearly adds depth to Northrup's songwriting is his sideline interest in writing material for musical theatre. He's composed music and lyrics for four musicals, including his latest *The 7th Circle*, with Citadel Theatre playwright-in-residence **Marty Chan** and Edmonton Symphony

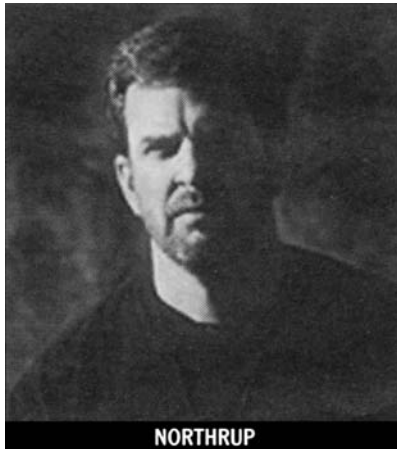
Orchestra composer-in-residence **Allan Gilliland**. *The 7th Circle* was commissioned by Fringe Theatre Adventures for its *Imagine* program in Canada.

"Being exposed to the situations I'm confronted with in my work does influence me," he says.

Beyond his songwriting skills, the anchor of this collection is Northrup's voice. He has a rich, baritone range and a strong, undeniably masculine delivery that gives his songs an edge often missing from other male acoustic-rock/folk recordings (which aim to be so sensitive and intimate that too many male artists wind up sounding impotent and whining).

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—ANDY NORTHRUP



All of this adds up to an artist and material that not only click in recorded form but demand to be heard in a live setting. At the moment, Northrup is sticking close to his Canadian home base, though a wise A&R exec or two could (and should) easily bankroll a showcase in the States—where a strong fanbase could be his for the taking.

For more information, visit the artist's Web site (anorthrup.com).