Material Issue is original, but ultimately annoying

INTERNATIONAL POP OVERTHROW
Material Issue
Polygram Records.

By SANDE CHEN

A MATERIAL ISSUE'S PUBLICIST SAYS: "This ain't no British, Techno-Pop, Rap, Disco, Skinny Butt, Mall Band... This is Material Issue."

Yep. Rather, this is a Chicago-area, name-dropping, annoying, so-called power-pop band.

This is not to say that there is unequivocally nothing of interest on Material Issue's debut album, International Pop Overthrow. "Chance of a Lifetime" is a clear possibility. And there can be no quibbles with either the originality of the music or the obvious intensity that drives it.

There is just something slightly annoying about this band. It's not chief songwriter/lead vocalist Jim Ellison's voice; that's rather androgynous. Perhaps it's his sentiment. His collection of prepubescent male fantasy, angst and anguish could easily be dished out in any role-reversal romance.

Material Issue: (from left) Jim Ellison, Mike Zelenko and Ted Ansani

The over-dramatic "Valerie Loves Me," begins the series on women and love, which also, on the way, includes Diane, Renee, Lulu, Christine, and others. Only "Trouble" does not present the rehashing of the same old basic subject matter.

"Chance of a Lifetime" gives a strong message of spite; everything else is weak-kneed. "Valerie Loves Me," "Diane" and "Renee Remains the Same" are not so bad, but still, this does not encourage me to shell out oodles of money. "There Was a Few" is pure inanity, and "This Letter" summarizes a feeling I would call "pretty sappy."

Actually, maybe it's those annoying backup vocal echoes. Cut the backup vocals on "Out Right Now," "Trouble" and "This Far Before." That might be the solution to everything. After all, there's nothing really wrong with the lyrics or the music. It's just that the backup vocals kind of pop in the same idiotic nature as the horns in R.E.M.'s "Finest Worksong" mutual horn mix.

Material Issue is not so bad. Supposedly, they're a great live band. They're scheduled to bring their power pop to Boston on Feb. 28.

By the way, there is a Material Issue Fan Club!