

come and see

Manic expression

BY VANESSA BULKACZ

Pavel Ivančič, a gaily dressed fashion designer, says, "Peace of Mind." Film producer Bára Křenková says, "Make Love, Don't Worry." Daniela Valešová, a young, jeans-clad lawyer, simply waves the Czech flag.

They and several other young Praguer smile or stare at you, big as life, from the walls of the Prague House of Photography as part of *CzechMania Messages*, a component of the traveling art and design festival CzechMania. Each subject stands in front of a silhouette of Prague Castle holding a handwritten sign. Below each image, bright red, computer-style text states the person's age, occupation and message.

Many of these "models" were chosen by photographers Štěpánka Stein and Salim Issa at random, off

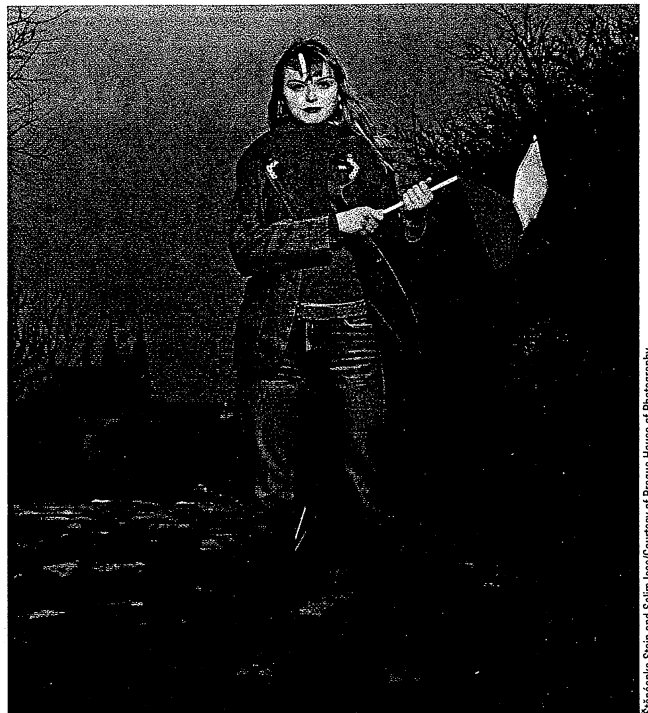
the street, and offered a chance to say something to the world.

Representing a broad range of careers and highly personal styles, they hold their chosen messages, written in either Czech or English, some merely scribbled on whatever material was at hand.

"[They had] a witty appearance and creativity working against stereotypes," Stein says. "The concept for the *Messages* project is simple: Just let people say what's on their minds."

Stein and Issa won a competition to create the photographic element of CzechMania 2004/2005, which is curated by Tomáš Žykan, former director of the Czech Center in London. First mounted in London last fall, *Messages* makes up the bulk of their twofold contribution. *CzechMania Design*, initially shown in Birmingham, England, and now occupying one wall at the Prague House, consists of five smaller portraits, also featuring models picked off the street. Each holds an original designed object, ranging from rubber boots to scooters, partially obscured by a flash of light.

Stein and Issa focus in their photography on "lifestyle documentary" and the work of contemporary Czech designers, according to the gallery. As befits born-and-



Má vlast: Daniela Valešová flies the flag for next gen Czechs

Štěpánka Stein and Salim Issa/Courtesy of Prague House of Photography

need to know

Štěpánka Stein & Salim Issa: CzechMania

When: Through April 10

Where: Prague House of Photography (Václavské nám. 31, Prague 1)

How much: 30 Kč

Info: www.php-gallery.cz

schooled Praguer (both graduated in 2001 from the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design), the image of the city factors heavily into their work. Varied vantage points and the muted colors created by Prague's oft-gray skies make

each portrait unique, but the castle backdrop lends them a common iconic stamp.

"You could do an exhibition like this anywhere in the world," Stein says. "But we wanted to make it distinctly Prague." ■

the spin

Radio Pra-ha

BY TIM OTIS

Discmans, iPods and mini-disc players all lack one important thing. Take a guess? They are commentator-free. In this age of DIY playlisting, radio days may be on the wane. But don't throw away that armband tuner just yet: There are entertaining and informative music broadcasts in Prague, several of them in English.

King of the heap just now is *Expres Evenings in English*, weeknights on Expres Radio (90.3 FM). American Robert Polo (Dr. Bob), a 20-year broadcasting vet, provides "humor, news and helpful tidbits about life in the Czech Republic." The show is a welcome brew of trendy tunes, entertainment-biz anecdotes, occasional guests and the always-informative

"Prague.tv minute," a tight roundup of tips from the Web site's enlightened club crawlers. This local flavor with a comedic Western twist plays well, and Polo's solid command of Czech helps make the show a shared experience for natives, expats and visitors. (Radio Expres owners Mlada Fronta Media claim a wide listenership among Czechs between 20 and 40.)

Unfortunately, the show, formerly on at 7 p.m., is being scaled back to an hour, from 8 to 9, to avoid conflict with local TV news. Filling a bit of the void, Radio Prague (92.6 FM) is bringing back its cultural calendar for English-speaking locals after a long hiatus. The program, airing Monday through Thursday a few minutes after 7 p.m., offers updates and

interviews with colorful scenesters and newsmakers.

With the passing of legendary DJ John Peel, who helped introduce working-class punk and alt-rock to wider audiences right up until his death late last year, BBC World (broadcasting here at 101.1 FM) seems to be struggling to find fresh musical input. A notable exception is the forward-thinking *White Label*. Airing Tuesday afternoon and early Wednesday morning, the show features Mark Goodier alongside an always-opinionated guest music-magazine editor, lambasting or praising tracks still a few months from release. Industry bigwigs trade insights on BBC's *The Music Biz*, which astutely reviews emerging trends and offers well-thought-out musical tributes by accomplished but lesser-known greats. The self-explanatory *Top of the Pops* airs Saturdays at 11:05 p.m., for those so inclined.

A dead medium? I think not. You don't need a PC, your toes tap, and the money you save on hard-

ware can go toward your first round. ■

Tim Otis isn't shy about plugging his own English-language program, High Fidelity, Fridays, 8-11 p.m. on Radio 1 (91.9 FM).

Tim's top 5

English-language radio

- 1) *White Label*, BBC (Tuesday at 2:30 p.m., Wednesday at 2:30 a.m.)
- 2) *Expres Evenings in English*, Expres Radio (Monday-Friday 8 p.m.)
- 3) *The Music Biz*, BBC (Thursday at 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m.; Friday at 2:30 a.m.)
- 4) Radio Prague, Cesky Rozhlas (Monday-Thursday at 7:07 p.m.)
- 5) *High Fidelity*, Radio 1 (Friday at 8 p.m.)