



Deve Bourke/Daily Nebraskan

J.J. Steele, lead singer for Head East.

Head East shakes the walls, thrills Royal Grove crowd

By Troy Park
Staff Reporter

The lights at the Royal Grove Nite Club dimmed the smoke-filled dance floor Tuesday as excited fans rushed to the front of the stage. The group Kidd Blitz had just finished playing its two-hour set and excited the crowd for Head East, the headline act. Members of the band came on stage and the roar became louder. The band tore into its first number, which thunders fourth from the huge Marshall stacks flanking both sides of the stage. Head East had arrived.

Head East is currently on a Midwest tour promoting its soon-to-be-released album, "Choice of Weapons." According to keyboardist and group-leader Roger Boyd, the tour has been an excellent chance to break in new members lead vocalist J.J. Steele, bass player Kurt Hansen and guitarist Matt Stewart. Drummer Steve Houston co-founded the band with Boyd in the early '70s. The current lineup has played together for about one year.

Head East has recorded eight albums, the most popular of which is the group's debut effort, "Flat As A Pancake," in 1975. The band also has enjoyed hit singles such as "Love Me Tonight," "Since You've Been Gone" and "Never Been Any Reason."

Head East met the crowd's expectations. The show was loud. Really loud. The incredible volume gave the band's hard-driving songs an added intensity as the group crashed from one song into the next.

J.J. Steele's lead vocals and stage presence propelled the group's intensity even further. With one foot propped on a monitor, dressed in tight red spandex pants and a black and white striped vest, Steele's sweat-drenched face reminds one of Van Halen's David Lee Roth. Steele is an excellent frontman.

Other new members Stewart and Hansen also stand out. Hansen's bass lines shook the floor, walls and ceiling. Stewart is an excellent guitarist.

The biggest response (and big it was) from the crowd of about 500 came when Steele announced that the band would play its biggest hit single "Never Been Any Reason." The people went wild and so did Head East.

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