

## Uriah Heep concert rocks crowd into trance

By Val McPherson

Expecting to be suffocated by a horde of persistent spare changers upon arriving at Pershing Auditorium Monday night, I was amazed to meet only one such street person.

His appeal to the disparity that would exist if I got to see the concert and he didn't was preceded almost apologetically with, "but I suppose you just have enough to get yourself in." It was a relief to enter the auditorium without having to invent any lies.

Tucky Buzzard started the show precisely at 7 to an assemblage which contained almost as many fire marshals as it did music lovers. The crowd quickly became a standing, hand-clapping, foot-tapping tribute to this cautious, yet talented London-based rock band.

Their set included original material from a soon to be released album *Alright on the Night* and interpretations of such standbys as *Jumpin Jack Flash*. They have no place among the mediocrity that has come to dominate the first band of a three-band concert.

After Tucky Buzzard's set, I met Bob Cooksey, their manager who introduced me to the five

members of the band. Covered with perspiration, bath towels and surrounded by promoter-provided heaps of cheese, relishes, sandwiches and cold beer, they talked quietly of the small but receptive audience in Lincoln and the warmth of American audiences in general. This tour has been a much needed victory in their struggle to emerge as more than just another English rock band.

Earth, Wind and Fire for the next 45 minutes guided onlookers through a maze of moods which included furious boogie and the mellowist of blues. This musical celebration on stage so infected the audience that even the usually tranquil upper tiers of Pershing joined the party.

The eight-man group turned in numerous superb solos which were further enhanced by precision lighting. The group warned that they were going to present "a little evil for your soul" and when they left the stage with a brilliant flash and puff of smoke, the audience remained in their pyrotechnic trance.

While trying to get backstage to talk with Lenny Smith, manager of Earth, Wind and Fire, one of Uriah Heep's "roadies" asked me to guard the amps on stage right during the set. From only a few feet away I was able to watch Uriah Heep crudely immitate the

music of their studio album.

For an hour and a half they mixed theatrical gimmicks (when a microphone stand was thrown dramatically into the air, the microphone fell off and hit the lead singer in the head) and distorted rock'n'roll hoping to somehow justify the undying enthusiasm of the wave of shouting fans that continually crashed against the stage.

After the concert I was finally able to interview Lenny Smith at the airport Holiday Inn. As members of Uriah Heep rollerskated up and down the carpeted halls and beat up a lampshade, Lenny talked with barely restrained optimism about the group's future. This was their first tour that wasn't restricted to black audiences and their promoters felt they were pulling 40% of the house.

They will cut their fifth album in November hoping to get the gold album that has eluded them. They tour again in January with leather costumes, new lighting and silk-screen covered amps. I left Lenny and his set man Shorty rapping about low budget blues and whether Shorty would get a clothing allowance when they make it to replace his new faded jersey t-shirt.

## Top jazz musicians highlight new album

By Diane Wanek

George Benson - *Body Talk* (CTI 6033)

CTI Records has been putting out some of the best-looking record covers, and in addition they have been doing some of the best recording of top jazz musicians around.

*Body Talk*, jazz guitarist George Benson's latest release, is no exception. Benson is backed up by great musicians including bassist Ron Carter, drummer Jack DeJohnette and pianist Harold Mabern.

Each gets his licks in on such tunes as "Dance" and "Plum", two of the best cuts on this album. I cared for the title cut least of all, only because it didn't seem to fit in with the others.

It's a fine recording altogether, arranged and conducted by Pee Wee Ellis, and Benson shows us he can cook with the best of them.

Diana Ross - *Touch Me in the Morning* (Motown M772L)

Diana Ross was reprimanded severely by critics when she altered her vocal style to suit her role as Billie Holiday. I rather liked the change it brought about, because I thought it might bring out a sophisticated new jazz vocalist.

Alas, Ross has adopted a lackluster nightclub style which is a disappointment.

The first side of this latest release opens with her hit single, "Touch Me In the Morning". The remainder of side one runs together and one cut is almost indistinguishable from the next.

The second side's redeeming factor is Tom Baird's "My Baby", which Ross does beautifully in a low register that's almost powerful. Side two also contains "Little Girl Blue", a Rodgers-Hart tune, which she also does nicely.

I don't know if Ross is modest or merely ignorant of her own potential, but this album does not reflect the best abilities of a vocalist who could be great.

## India Assn. to offer film

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