

arts/entertainment

New Wave washes over shores of rock'n' roll

By Peg Scheldrick

Waves are usually associated with coastal locales, but if a wave is powerful enough, it may eventually sweep its way to the Midwest. That is, if the wave in question is New Wave.

New Wave music may be settling in as successor to the moribund disco trend, which doesn't look like it will be staying alive much longer. At least, that is the trend nationally. Locally, disco is still popular, but New Wave has definitely arrived and the first ripples are apparent.

New Wave describes music that shuns the intricate, overdubbed melodies of a group like Steely Dan for the simpler, "powerhouse" sound of early '60s rock 'n' roll, according to Rick Morris of the Spec's (a local band that includes New Wave tunes in its repertoire). But he doesn't like trying to classify it.

"New Wave is just another word to me," he said. Morris sees it as an alternative to commercial, top 40-type music.

Ron Jester of Applause Attractions, which handles some New Wave acts, pointed out that the New Wave label has been applied to groups like the Cars as well as to works like Linda Ronstadt's new album, so classification obviously isn't easy. Also, many groups are "not putting both feet in it at this time around here." That is to say, they are adding some New Wave material to the act rather than making it the whole act.

Not boogie fever

But some genuine New Wave bands have sprung up locally, among them Small Wonder, the Outcats, the Jets, the Violators, the Blue Ducks, Spec's, a.k.a., Black Rose, and the Throbs. The names alone are enough to indicate they have something different in mind than boogie fever.

It isn't easy getting started as a New Wave band in Lincoln.

"We have very few requests for New Wave acts per se," said Bob Coder of CID Productions. "There is definitely some market out there, however, what people really want is dance music," he said. Jester, of Applause Attractions, said that

the trend is quite noticeable in the larger metropolitan markets like Denver and Phoenix and on the coasts, but it's less obvious locally.

"It is still difficult for me to sell a New Wave band around here. People are still a little skeptical yet," he said.

He said it's easier to book a group like Skuddur, an Omaha band that has a "cult following," which has a definite audience to bring with it.

"A lot of them (New Wave bands) are basement bands at this point," said Doug Fenton of the Lincoln Musicians Association. He said that clubs tend to book country swing bands, for example, because they know they can "get the bucks."

Want dance music

"We haven't ever gotten paid to play what we want to play," said Morris. He explained that when booked for a dance, for example, the people want familiar music to move to. Consequently, the group has to have plenty of familiar tunes in their repertoire. New Wave is not where the money is locally.

"It's really depressing sometimes," he said.

The Drumstick and El Ranchito have hosted some of the local New Wave bands. The Drumstick had phased out its music night but will be bringing it back, according to spokesman Bob Rock, so the club scene is not totally hopeless.

And there are other significant indications of New Wave's arrival in Lincoln. Local clothing stores are plugging the "New Wave Look." New Wave nights are being heard on the airwaves and even in a local discotheque.

For those concerned with learning to dance to the new sound, the Dance Emporium is offering a course in "free style" movement which, according to Caryn Wood, will adapt to New Wave and many other styles of music. The course and its advertising are meant to broaden the appeal of dancing.

She said that many people associate dancing with disco, and "a lot of people, if they hear the word disco, react violently." The dance school would prefer people

"who don't feel they have to have a three piece white suit."

Since dancing is an integral part of the disco trend and it seems that the dance teachers are trying to shift emphasis away from disco, it seems reasonable to predict

that in the not-too-distant future the old disco ball will sink slowly in the west once and for all. Meanwhile, slowly but surely the New Wave is seeping in. As Bob Coder said, "Time will see where the whole situation is going to."



Black Rose

Photo by Mark Billingsley

These members of the New Wave group Black Rose are part of the surging popularity of that musical style in the Midwest. From left they are: J.E. Van Horne, Yogi Clemmer, Sandra Morar and Kevin Hill.

'Guess Who' music recalls images of car radio

By Michael Zangari

I can remember picking up a copy of *Rolling Stone* magazine several years ago and reading a review of one of my favorite groups. It was one of those toss-of-the-coin reviews, the type where you're not sure if the reviewer likes or dislikes the album. The review was of Guess Who and the phrase that sticks in my mind is the comment that the group provided "a good, (if somewhat dubious) view of Canadian rock 'n' roll." To this day I still don't know what it meant.

backtracks

Anymore, Canadian rock 'n' roll is as homogenous as American rock 'n' roll. Listening to April Wine will convince you that our Canadian neighbors have picked up just as many bad habits as we have. But the real crime does not begin or end there.

It lies in a certain lack of passion that has been developed as an art by groups like Foreigner and Styx, and a host of imitators. While it goes without saying that a band cannot get into a major studio any more unless it is technically perfect, something has been sacrificed. Production is squeaky clean, lyrics are harmless and inane, and rock 'n' roll isn't fun anymore.

No passion, fun

If there is a real crime it lies there. Without passion or fun, we are producing the elevator music we'll be hearing in our forties. Rock and roll is better than Sominex.

I guess any summation or defense of the Guess Who would have to begin there. As sloppy as they got in their long tenure as Canada's premiere singles band, they never

lost their sense of fun or energy.

The Best Of The Guess Who, which features the best of a whole host of Randy Bachman/Burton Cummings top-flight singles, represents the early years. The sound has a jazzy rhythm and blues base with wonderful vocals by Cummings. Included are "American Woman," "Undone," "No Sugar Tonight," "No Time," and "These Eyes." The album is full of fine music and good memories from a time when the car radio was all there was.

Curiosity items

I'm concerned in this column, though, with the post Bachman band, and this is where most of the interest lies. The albums with Bachman have not aged very well, and with the exception of "American Woman," they are mostly curiosity items.

Bachman was replaced with two of the most rag-tag guitarists ever to record. Kurt Winters and Don MacDougal are terribly lazy guitarists who made up their lack of expertise with sheer bravado, trading leads with Cummings' infectious piano solos and vocals. It provided the band with a harder edge which maintained it throughout the rest of the decade with another load of hits.

The following albums are in no special order. The band was certainly prolific, if not altogether consistent. These albums are all cut-outs now.

Share The Land is a patchy album which was Winter's first with the band. Odd moments out, this album still contained four minor hits. It includes the title track, "Hang on to Your Life," a bizarre acid rocker that is convincing in its anti-drug abuse vein, and the two best Winters songs, "Bus Rider," and "Hand me Down World." Both of these songs are fairly rough-and-tumble as singles, the former containing a expletive.

Strange but wonderful

Rockin' is another entirely strange album. It contains two excessively strange but wonderful hits. "Broken

Hearted Bopper," is another hard-as-nails single with the college message "summa cum laude is a big OK." The other, "Your Nashville Sneakers" is a jazzy piano number featuring Cummings' ever present sense of humor and smoky vocals. The rest of the album is particularly schizoid.

So Long Bannatyme, Hello My Cheveray Home is probably the best of these early experiments. It is more unified, although it contains two longer jazzy rambles. "Gray Day" and "Goin' a Little Crazy." It also contains tight harmonies and some interesting synthesized guitar on "Paintrain." The singles off this album are "Raindance," and the brilliant melancholy ballad "Sour Suite."

Of the latter albums, *10* is particularly notable for its country influences. It is a tighter album than most, and contains the anti-art rock song "Glamor Boy" which features the memorable lyrics, "for \$100,000 you can look like your sister tonight, for \$100,000, I think it'll work out right..."

Gritty album

Artificial Paradise is also noteworthy for its lack of Cummings compositions. It is much more gritty than the others, and really is very good. The Cummings songs which do appear are top-notch. The package gets five stars. The album comes in an envelope make to look like a Reader's Digest contest, and is fun to read.

The rest of the catalog is definitely taste material. If you like the rest, you might like these, too. Dominic Troiano, (formerly with the James Gang) fills in for Kurt Winter on *Flavors*, providing fine guitar once again for the band. But it is not enough to save it. Their final album, *Music*, is worthless.

Since Cummings has left the band, the members have reformed with MacDougal as leader. I wouldn't hazard a guess on what they sound like now.