

arts / entertainment

Rock band eyes big-city gigs, record contract

By Pat Higgins

According to a market survey done last week in the *Wall Street Journal*, the most preferred leisure-time activity for young adults 18 to 24 is "something called partying."

Sociologists interested in observing this phenomenon first would be well advised to venture out to the Royal Grove, particularly on a weekend night. The Grove is what the Iron City Houserockers have in mind when they say, "Have a good time (but get out alive)."

By popular consensus, Blackberry Winter is considered the premiere group to play at the Grove, and last Saturday they concluded a successful week-long stand there. Blackberry Winter is an undeniably tight, professional outfit that has existed in various forms since the early 70s when it migrated from Kearney to the capital city.

Ballroom circuit

Bass player Randy Sharp and drummer Murray Kahler have been in the band since 1971, said guitarist Fred Bettge, "who joined the group in 1975. Blackberry Winter

plays the ballroom circuit on a fairly continuous basis, which could be a grind, but Bettge is optimistic about the work.

"We are making a lot of progress right now. When we play, we like to do a healthy mix of covers and originals. We do 14 of our own songs now, and that is the most important part of the show for us. Randy, Rich Lane and myself do most of the writing."

The melodic originals are, without a doubt, the highlight of the performance.

and several of them have the potential to be hits.

"We have a studio here in Lincoln where we have been working on some demo tapes to give to record companies," said Bettge. "We were out in New York for a while and we are going to spend the month of February in Los Angeles, where we can play some showcase gigs and hopefully meet some record company people."

Zander at Grove

Cheap Trick made an appearance in Lincoln last week and lead singer Robin Zander made the scene at the Grove.

"He seemed to enjoy our band," said Bettge. "We were offered the opportunity to open for Cheap Trick at Pershing, but we had a prior commitment. Zander seemed to be a real nice guy. He is not on a real ego trip. A couple of us went back to the hotel and partied with him after the show."

Blackberry Winter is looking forward to making its video debut soon on Nebraska Educational Network, which is sponsoring a series comparable to "Soundstage."

"They are going to have four different kinds of bands," Bettge said. Blackberry Winter is the only rock band that they selected. They haven't decided if it is going to be a half hour or an hour show yet.

"It will be a challenge because there will be no opportunities to overdub. But we are really looking forward to doing it. It should be a lot of fun."

review

For those effete collegiates who have never dared to enter the rough and tumble ambience of this establishment, an explanation is in order. The Grove has a mainly working-class crowd that is chiefly interested in, as they say, "getting down." It would be an ideal locale to hold a Charlie Daniels look-a-like contest.

The form of music preferred is note-for-note covers of "progressive" hits, which allows for a maximum of mindless boogie by the audience. So if hearing Kansas, Foreigner, *et al* causes a religious experience in your life, the Grove is the place to be.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

'Kennedys' Children' presents a difficult lesson

By Penelope M. Smith

The 60s is an ambiguous time for anyone to deal with. For a great many people, the decade isn't over. It's been touted as the high tide of a generation and venerated by one that never experienced it. So that deriving any sort of message or meaning is just short of impossible.

Our lack of detachment, and yet our inexperience, makes Robert Patrick's play, *Kennedy's Children*, a difficult lesson. After the initial feelings of "not applicable," one discovers uncomfortable questions which apply to all of us, whether children of the 70s or of the 40s.

theater review

Five characters sit in a bar in the early 70s reciting the tragic and monotonous litany of their lives. They wander before your eyes like plodding George Segal sculptures of plaster as they recite the way they once formed and "lived" in the 60s.

'Never ending battle'

The director, Cary Wayne Noble, describes the play as "part of the never ending battle between our past and our present." But Patrick's script leaves his older viewers saying "I remember when there were hippies all over," and his younger ones with confused feelings and an inability to relate. To overcome these feelings requires a lot of emotionally exhausting thought, a little philosophy and a willingness to pay attention.

One views the play with the same intimate discomfort as one feels when sitting next to a verbose drunk. The characters have no present, only pasts, and they speak of them in an alcoholic haze of bared souls that leaves one half listening and restless, yet fascinated in spite of oneself.

Patrick plays with perceptions and how humans proceed from them. Noble says that "memories are strange inventions of the human mind," but the minds of Patrick's characters are inventions of their memories, they derive their sense of self from the world around them so that one is left with the question of how strong or unique a thing individuality actually is.

The cast did a good job with a very difficult play. The desire to be gone in the second act came more from Patrick's words and tales of lives going nowhere.

The best performance of a very good cast was Catherine Lyon's Rona, an activist who saw the 60s as waves of love and beauty only to be disillusioned by a mass movement toward utopia that never came. Lyon handles her character with a forthright toughness laced with memories of old naivete that make her both comprehensible and touching.

The killing in his head

Robert Deschaine as the Vietnam veteran Mark has a tension and a way of staring that brings out the little boy that can't stop the killing in his head. He sits shaking at his table, drinking his beer, the anger ready to spill out because the boy's identity was so twisted and maimed that the man was never allowed to form.

Amy Hinds does a marvelous job of making her character, Wanda, humorous, yet detestable at the same time. She is a mouse without color, personality, passion or excitement. Sipping her white wine, she confuses JFK with Christ and lives in a non-existent Camelot with all the ecstasy of Saint Theresa.

Phil Rooney plays the down and out gay actor, Sparger, with a slow numbness and time for thought that allows the audience to laugh and be saddened. He speaks with a disillusionment that is sometimes funny and some-

times crude, but always affecting. He sees and is still condemned to be the way he is.

"I believe everything was different once," he says, "everything was the same once, too."

Continued on Page 9

Corporate heads roll in Fantasyland as Mickey loses out to sex appeal

The Mouse wasn't happy, which didn't surprise me. One of his pet projects over the years, "Wonderful World of Disney," had been axed by NBC after god-knows-how-many seasons, a victim of old age and low ratings. The Mouse, Mickey Mouse, pointed in the general direction of a chair in his office and said, "Have a seat."

clark

He didn't wait for me to ask any questions. "You probably want to know how I feel about the show going down the tubes," he said. He stopped to light a cigar. "Let me tell you, it made me sick when I first heard it, but I'm starting to accept it. This is a tough business. Shows get bumped off every day."

"But not many shows last as long as 'The Wonderful World of Disney,'" I countered. "Do you have any idea what went wrong this year?"

"Sure," he said, settling back in his chair and resting his feet on his desk. "We got cuted right off the air."

"Cuted?"

"Yeah. Past tense of cute."

I did not want to know what kind of linguistic hocus-

pocus turned "cute" into a verb, but I did want to know what he was talking about. "How did you get, as you say, 'cuted' off the air?"

"There are five ways you can keep a show on the air in this business. You can be sexy, you can be violent, you can be funny, you can be warm, and you can be cute, in that order. On 'Disney,' house rules said that we couldn't be sexy or violent, which were two big strikes against us right there. We looked at our available talent and decided that we could be funny sometimes and warm sometimes and cute all of the time."

"So what went wrong?" I interjected.

"Let me finish. Like I said, our strong suits were the bottom three items on the list, but we had a market because of our time slot. Sunday evening. People have been watching pro football all day and they either forget to change the channel or they want a change of pace or something and there we are, an automatic audience. But then CBS came along with '60 Minutes.' That show hurt us, because they could be sexy or violent or funny or warm, or all of them in one show, depending on whom they interviewed or what scandal they exposed. That left us with cute. We weren't worried, though. It's hard to beat cartoon characters and animals for cute appeal."

Continued on Page 9