daily nebraskan

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orts entertainment

Forum features live rock of Star City Players

Review by Bob Crisler

If FM rock is what trips your trigger, then the Star City Players, who were featured last week at the Forum, are for you.

This solid sextet plays virtual carbon copies of such faves of the airwaves as Bos Scaggs, Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers. Saturday night's opening set was a trip down memory lane circa 1980, with easy-listening pop (Josie, What a Fool Believes) dropping in on the ample crowd's appreciative eardrums.

The Forum, previously known as Starship Enterprise, meanwhile, has tread a safe path in choosing ever-popular rock music over any other of the more obvious antecedents to disco. The club's former dance floor has been tastefully encroached upon with an arrangement of lounge furniture and hanging plants, while the center of attention has been shifted upstairs to a new dance area and stage.

As the band segued into Genesis' Misunderstanding, aspiring Arthur Murrays began to take to the floor to practice the latest touch dancing steps.

The band itself is a synthesis of college-trained musicians who complement each other quite readily with their overlapping vocal ranges and astute knowledge of their instruments.

Band members

Lead singer Bev Jester leads the band with her exceptionally clear, wide-ranged voice, and adds to that an occasional outing on acoustic guitar on some countryderived numbers. Husband Ron Jester shares rhythmic honors on drums with bass player Dave Battles, while Jamie Krutz handles keyboards. Another married couple in the band, Joyce and Woody Nelson, add background vocals and lead guitar, respectively.

Band members see their classical training as not incongruous to their present musical interests.

"We look at it like we've taken classical training to get the basics, and once you've got that, then you can apply those techniques to rock'n'roll," says Nelson, who teaches classical guitar at Nebraska Wesleyan University.



The Star City plays at the Forum Saturday night.

downtown nightclub. According to guitarist Nelson, some similarity in styles is intended.

"We try and make it sound like the original composer wanted it to sound, but whether we try to or not, our own personal styles have a way of melting through in the end result."

Nelson is pleased with the reception the Players have had in Lincoln, but he sees the band as part of a much larger area.

"The live scene locally is pretty healthy, although we could always use more local support. I think the quality of musicians in Lincoln is exceptional, and it's exciting what's going on in town right now," he said. Nelson says that the "women-in-rock" trend had nothing to do with the lineup of the seven-month old band.



Photo by Mitch Hrdlicka

The song selection, which resembles a KFMQ playlist, is generally on the tamer edge or rock, which has a neverending popularity among local audiences. An evening with the Star City Players is an evening of innocuous escapism.

"We try to keep a certain amount of quality in our material," said Woody Nelson. "There's a fine line between good music and the music that a majority of people want to hear. We don't want to do just anything, only what is tasteful."

"I think the songs we do pretty much reflect our tastes. We all like Steely Dan and Michael McDonald of the Doobies," said singer Bey Jester.

Nelson said the group's selection is "pretty commercial, Everybody knows it and likes it."

Radio music

In the Players' live set, there is a tendency to think you're listening to the radio instead of sipping a beer in a

"I think it's important to have good musicians in the band. If they're women, then that's great, but they aren't in the band because they're women."

The musicians' likes and dislikes in music certainly run along relatively conservative lines. Keyboardist and violinist Jamie Kurtz favors older, established rock group Gentle Giant "and of course Steely Dan, of course Yes," he said. "As for new wave, since it's really not doing anything exciting musically, the lyrics really have to be good for me to like it."

"Some musical style is definitely going to come out of the eighties," bass guitarist Dave Battles said, "People's tastes are definitely getting better."

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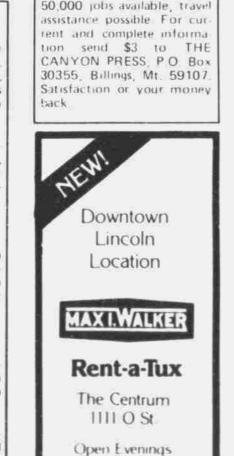
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