

# Riffs bring K.C. sound to Lincoln

By Pat Higgins

Kansas City hasn't always been known just as home of the Royals. During the heyday of the Pendergast machine (which produced Harry S. Truman), County Basie, Jay McShann and the other blue devils created the Kansas City sound: a mix of jazz, blues and swing that was both cool and classy.

Rich Hill and the Riffs, featuring Ida McBeth, will bring the swing to Larry's Showcase Wednesday and Thursday. In a phone interview, Hill said the band is carrying on the Kansas City tradition of jumpin' blues.

"Ida McBeth, who does most of the singing, is a really big woman and she's really pretty," Hill said. "She sings a lot like Aretha Franklin."

Part of the Riffs' repertoire is from Julia Lee, an obscure K.C. artist of the '30s. Other favorites are Billie Holliday and Dinah Washington.

"We do about half a dozen songs by Julia Lee. She was really great," Hill said. "Her heyday was during the Depression, which isn't that much

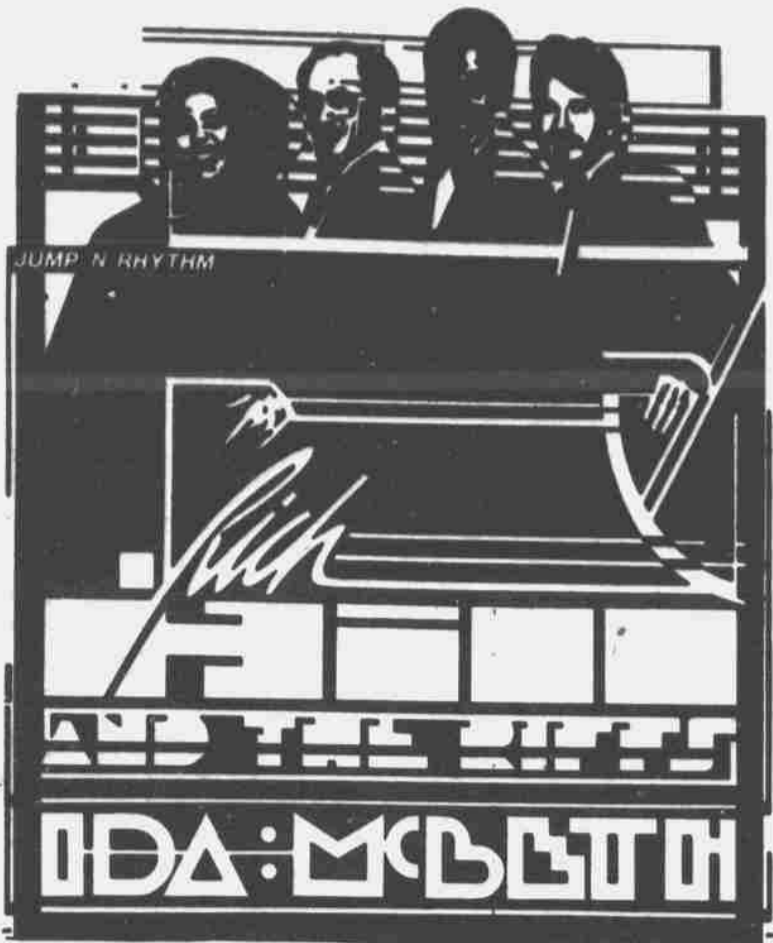


Photo courtesy of Larry's Showcase

different from today."

Hill, who also sings, claims jazz great Mose Allison as one of his idols. Instrumentally, Hill plays keyboards, switching from Hammond organ to acoustic piano.

"We like to start the show by doing a few Latin instrumentals, and then we bring Ida out. We all sing though, too," Hill said.

"Brian can do everything — standards, blues, whatever," Hill said.

Bass player Brian Hill shows great range, as he sings material ranging from Dr. John to Tony Bennett to Professor Longhair. He also is the vice

president of the Musicians Mutual in Kansas City, the same local affiliate 627 that was immortalized in the film "Last of the Blue Devils."

"The black and white unions used to be separate, but they merged in the 60s," Hill said. "The black musicians keep that place as a hangout still."

The group tends to dress well.

"Ida always likes to wear big flowing gowns," Hill said. "The rest of us have been dressing down lately. Maybe we'll wear tuxes at the Showcase. I better see if they're back from the cleaners."

# Tractor sport . . .

Continued from Page 8

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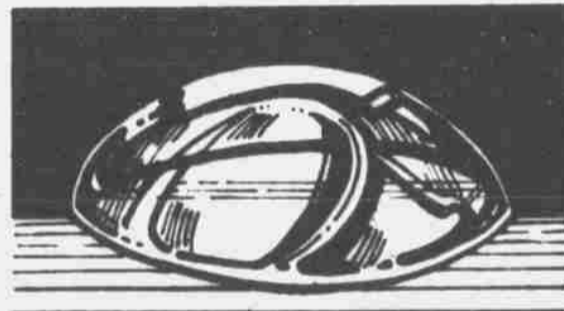
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