

Arts and Entertainment

Rattlers prove other bands exist in Lincoln

By Bill Allen
Senior Reporter

Editor's note: Beats is a weekly feature about local bands. The stories contain the opinion of the author.

They're raw. They're raunchy. At least that's how The Rattlers describe themselves. They might add "rough" to their self-description, but as long as they're having fun.



The five men rockabilly band has been together for about 1½ years now. The band recently had the dubious honor of being named local group of the year by a Lincoln Sunday Journal-Star music poll.

The "dubious" is because only about 300 readers responded to the poll and a total of 39 bands got at least one vote.

Rattlers lead vocalist Luke Lionberger received the runner-up award as best male vocalist in the poll, which ran in the Jan. 6 Focus Sunday supplement.

The group isn't taking the poll results too seriously.

"It only took about 15 votes to win the thing," said Ed DeBord, guitarist.

But according to the other guitarist, Mike Miller, the poll did serve at least one useful purpose. "It showed people that there are other bands in Lincoln besides Charlie Burton."



The Rattlers performed last Thursday at Bill's Saloon, 1020 P St. Group members are Mike Miller, (left), Luke Lionberger and Ed DeBord.

The Rattlers play rock 'n' roll and rockabilly, mostly from the late Fifties and early Sixties plus a fair amount of their own songs of that same style.

"Rockin' Bob" and "At The Drive-in Movies," two of their own songs, will be released on a 45 r.p.m. record in about three weeks.

Miller, who wrote "Rockin' Bob" and most of the group's original music, said the song "is not about Bob Kerrey. It's about a fictitious Bob who just happens to be governor of Nebraska, has a wooden leg and dates movie stars."

Some sample lyrics:

Fly'n down the highway,
We gotta roam.
We pull into his driveway,
But he's never home.

If you've got the friends and want the job,
You can be like Rockin' Bob.

Hangs 'round in bars,
Got plenty of friends.
Knows movie stars,
The fun never ends...

How does a local band get started? Mike Baird, bass guitarist, put an ad in a local paper asking for someone to jam with. Miller answered the ad and eventually the two added Lionberger, DeBord and, most recently, their third in a series of drummers, Bill Gibbon.

The group played their first official "gig" as Johnny Flush and the Floaters. That engagement didn't go well, according to Lionberger, who said the crowd, attending a huge kegger party, wanted more new wave and top 40.

As The Rattlers, Lionberger said, the

group started with the goal of playing the Zoo Bar. "And that's the first place we played," he said.

The Rattlers also have played Howard Street in Omaha and several private parties. Last Thursday they opened for The Pedestrians at Bill's Saloon.

On Jan. 25 they will play from 10:30 to 11:30 p.m. at UNL's Walpurgisnacht in the Nebraska Union Crib.

The goal of the group now, Lionberger said, is to play a fraternity party. He said the group's hard rockin' sound would be the right kind of music.

What the group doesn't have is slow paced music. The group has about 50 to 55 songs in their repertoire, and almost all are fast paced, Miller said.

"We don't have a lot of variety," Lionberger said. "It's mostly rockabilly."

The group plays songs popularized by Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Nat King Cole and Eddie Cochran. They recently added one by Nancy Sinatra and are finalizing the work soon on Peggy Lee's "I'm a Woman."

"We take a song and 'rattlerize' it," said DeBord, who along with Lionberger, provides most of the group's stage presence.

"We take it and play it a little bit dirtier, a little bit raunchier..." he said. "And with simple arrangements."

Like most bands just starting out, the group said their biggest problem right now is money. None of them were ready to quit their jobs and play full time, and three of them — Lionberger, Miller and Gibbon — are UNL students.

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Wingtips' 'happy sound' rocks crowd, inexperience plagues Vagrants' act



David Bourke/Daily Nebraskan
Doug Carl of the Omaha-based Wingtips blows his sax at the Drumstick Restaurant Friday.

By Jim Kreikemeier
Staff Reporter

The Wingtips, a band taking a fresh vigorous approach to a music termed by keyboardist Mike Findley as "Jamican Dance Tunes," kept Drumstick patrons dancing all Friday evening.

Bass player Russ Hoffmeyer's funky style and excellent runs stood out and provided a beat essential to the music.

Guitarist Ben Sempek was another standout as he switched from leads to rhythm without losing awareness of song progression.

Steve Aden handled most of the lead vocals while keeping tight rhythm on the drums. Doug Carl on sax and Mike Findley on keyboards

rounded out the band and provided added emphasis.

This young group seemed glad to work together and energetic about the music. The overall sound made the individual instruments easily distinguishable without being overpowering.

Renditions of "I Shot the Sheriff" and "Twist and Shout" really bopped. A number of the songs performed sounded alike, giving a feeling of monotony.

"The band is not looking for deep meaning; our interest is in the feeling of the music," Findley said. "The intention of the music is to produce a happy sound to make people get up and dance and enjoy themselves."

They were quite successful at this largely because of Findley's constant energy on stage. The music ideas Findley presented seem adapted to nightclub performing and should help them develop a steady following.

Their music is not radio or pop music and they are not a cover band. The Wingtips avoided the staleness that often accompanies playing songs popularized by other groups by creating original renditions.

The Wingtips are interesting and good natured on stage as well as off. Goals for the band, according to Findley, are "to take things as they come and continue to write more originals."

The approach these gentlemen take to music is sincere. They have fun and in turn so do their audiences.

The Vagrants, a four-man band from Lincoln opened the show playing a mixture of reggae and rock 'n' roll. It was their first live performance together. The band is composed of three former members of the Jetsons and one new member. I was not impressed with their sound. The musicians evidently were talented but they did not seem to have it together yet. I'm certain time and practice will help clear up most of the problems evident Friday night.

HOT SPOTS



Works by Alex Katz, are included in the exhibition of American Art Since 1970 at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

Television

• On the 8th Day, a documentary exploring the atmospheric and ecological effects of a nuclear confrontation on Earth, will air tonight at 8 on WTBS. The special offers new information from scientists and leading experts about the post-war period known as "nuclear winter."

• American Playhouse will feature Go Tell It On The Mountain starring Olivia Cole, Ruby Dee and Paul Winfield. The film depicts the Grimes family life from 1892 to 1935 both in the rural South and in the volatile urban life of Harlem in the 1930s. The film is scheduled to air at 8 p.m. on Channel 12.

At the Sheldon

• The Man Who Knew Too Much, the last of a series of Alfred Hitchcock films at Sheldon Film Theatre, will be screened tonight through Jan. 20 at 7 and 9:15 p.m. with a Saturday matinee at 3 p.m. James Stewart and Doris Day star in this film about a couple whose son is kidnapped by a group of terrorists who think Stewart knows too much.

• A new exhibit, American Art Since 1970, was unveiled Sunday at Sheldon. The exhibit was organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York from their permanent collection of painting, sculpture and drawings of 20th century American art. The exhibit will be at Sheldon through March 3.