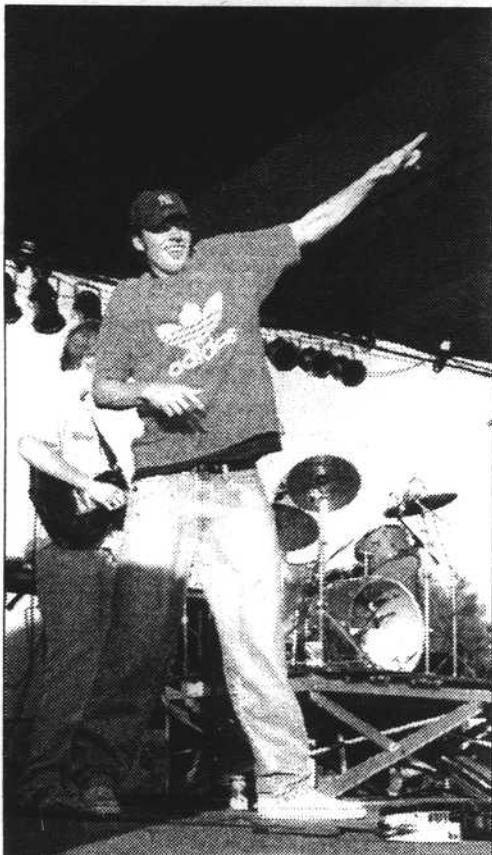




DN FILE PHOTO
KID QUARKSTAR, seen here performing at the Big Red Welcome Aug. 24, ends its two-year gig this weekend, playing for the last time Friday and Saturday nights at The Brass Rail, 1436 O St.



DN FILE PHOTO
WITH ONLY ONE full-length album under its belt, Kid Quarkstar calls it quits as band members pursue other ventures.

kid QUARKSTAR

Band on the Run

Dual concerts conclude, commemorate Lincoln group's career

BY BRET SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

The star that burns twice as bright burns half as long.

After only two years as one of Lincoln's most original club bands, Latin, jazz and hip-hop hybrid Kid Quarkstar plays its last concerts this weekend at The Brass Rail, 1436 O St.

Appearing Friday and Saturday at 9 p.m., the band has different plans for both nights. Reuniting former members, Friday's "All Star Blowout" will be a night of energy, reminiscence and dance, said keyboardist Jesse Becker. The same applies for the final show Saturday, except only the group's current members will perform, and it may be a bit more sentimental.

"There is some nostalgia there, definitely," Becker said. "I'm not too emotionally caught up in it. If I was, I'm over it, and want to have a great couple of shows."

While the band is reluctant to offer details regarding specifics of the breakup, members agree they will part amicably.

"We are all still best friends," guitarist James Valentine said. "We have nothing but love and respect for each other."

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Facing the losses of trumpeter Nate Wallcott to Lincoln's newest national offering, Lullaby for the Working Class, and vocalist Ruth Oda, the group was at a crossroads concerning its future. Wallcott will join Lullaby on its upcoming international tour, while Oda soon will be in New York trying to make a break on Broadway.

With the departure of the two, some band members felt it was time for Kid Quarkstar to go supernova.

However, some members — including Valentine, Becker and drummer/vocalist Carson Young — ignored the growing pains and wanted to continue with the project. The three expressed dissatisfaction about the band's dissolution, but deeper reasons disrupted Kid Quarkstar's inertia some time ago, Young said.

While Young admits the varied avenues explored by the group may have divided it, he

said the real cause was much less tangible.

"Kid Quarkstar was kind of driven by this force that was beyond the human capacity for understanding," he said. "Along the way that balance became unsettled, and we saw no other alternative but to disband and discontinue this project just so it was written and it was done."

The composition of the band itself may have caused its undoing. Young said while some members wanted to continue with the Kid Quarkstar project, others were ready to explore different avenues.

The breakup, he said, was inevitable.

Kid Quarkstar is notorious for its eclectic and continually evolving sound, ranging from a lounge jazz groove to Latin-flavored hip-hop.

Young said the band's varied sounds divided the group into two camps: one focused on instrumentally heavy jazz, the other on hip-hop and acid jazz. However, band members never had problems reconciling the different schools, Young said. If at all, varied musical visions played a minor role in the disbanding, he said.

The breakup comes on the heels of a summer of heavy touring, which included several shows in Colorado and California.

Spending weeks on end in a dilapidated van could make a wreckage of any love story. Becker said the summer tour was a pivotal moment for the future of the group.

"There was a point early in the summer when we had decided we were going to make a really strong push toward being successful or just break up," he said. "We tried to make that the final push toward getting signed and making some money at it. It just wore on us."

It seems although several members are unhappy about the abbreviated future of Kid Quarkstar, the reasons for the breakup remain intentionally ambiguous and as individual as each member of the band.

IN THE BEGINNING

It may have been the inherent individuality of Kid Quarkstar members that propelled their group so rapidly in local quarters.

Kid Quarkstar was forged from a passion for jazz. Initially an after-school combo, the Southeast High students moved from detention

hall to beer hall during Fall '95 when they landed a nine-month gig at Club 1427, 1427 O St.

There, the band played every Thursday night in front of a public audience. The experience, Valentine said, was invaluable.

"(Club 1427) totally trained us," he said. "It was like a laboratory for compositions, and it allowed us to develop and learn a lot."

During the stint, Kid Quarkstar shifted phases of musical expression and style, evolving from lounge jazz to Latin-based grooves and finally to hip-hop. Despite gliding through a kaleidoscope of genres, Becker said the heart of Kid Quarkstar's sound was always in place.

"It's black music," he said. "Everything we play is from an African-American influence and we took an Afro-centric approach to it."

The band's education at Club 1427 during the 1995-96 academic year provided it with a sense of purpose and the foundation for further growth, Valentine said.

"We went from sitting down and playing background music to having a 'listen to us' attitude," he said.

About the time Kid Quarkstar finished its contract with the club, the band had evolved primarily into an acid jazz and hip-hop ensemble and rapidly established a strong following locally and in Lawrence, Kan., Becker said.

THE FADING STAR

By this summer, the band settled into what many of its members and fans felt was a satisfying groove.

Of course, others felt differently. Although the summer tour met with limited success — including a San Francisco show at the infamous acid venue Elbow Room — record label representatives decided against signing the group after seeing it perform in Los Angeles.

Back in Lincoln, band members hope Kid Quarkstar is remembered for its contribution to local music.

"I want people to feel like the show was the best thing that happened to the Lincoln music scene in a long time," Becker said. "I hope people will be saying, 'I am glad I was here to be a part of that.'"

“
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JAMES VALENTINE
guitarist for Kid Quarkstar