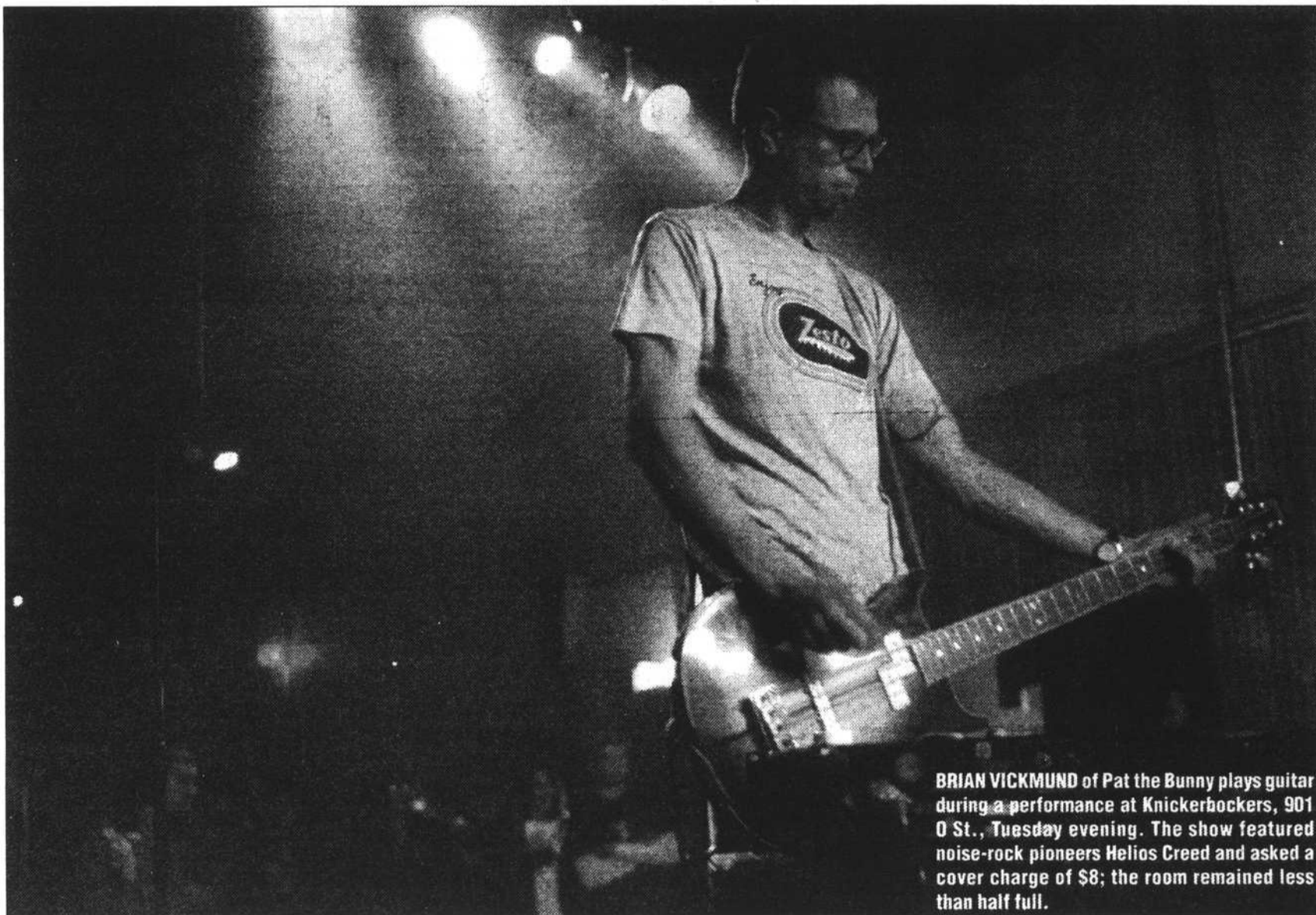


# Cover Me...



BRIAN VICKMUND of Pat the Bunny plays guitar during a performance at Knickerbockers, 901 O St., Tuesday evening. The show featured noise-rock pioneers Helios Creed and asked a cover charge of \$8; the room remained less than half full.

## I'm Going In

Say what you will — you get what you pay for.  
Lincoln's night life suffers from customers  
reluctant to pay cover charges

Story by  
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Photo by  
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If Lincoln's population were embodied by one man, he'd probably shop at thrift stores and order his dates Happy Meals at McDonald's. We're all a bunch of cheap skates.

At least that's what people are saying about this town in regards to entertainment cover charges.

Maybe even more arresting is that the accusatory crowd is Lincoln's own.

Frequent tavern-goer Emily Madison, 21, has noticed people often walk up to club entrances and turn around after discovering that there was a fee to see bands. She said she regularly paid to listen to groups.

Madison said among the cheapest social group in Lincoln is fraternity and sorority members.

"They look disgusted like, 'I have a right to be here. I have a right to get drunk,'" she said. "I think that's disappointing."

Linsi Peterson, a member of the Alpha Chi

Omega sorority, said she and her friends normally choose to spend their money on alcohol later in the evening rather than live entertainment.

"But I wouldn't restrict that behavior to greek," she said.

Peterson said the possibility of meeting new people also played into going to bars without live performances.

"With music or whatever going on, it's hard to have conversations," she said.

Lincoln club managers and employees believe that people here just aren't used to paying covers.

They say it generally has to do with the nature of Lincoln's population.

It makes perfect cultural sense.

This miniature city, with its college-town night life, is largely made up of small-town transplants. Normally, such people aren't conditioned to nonchalantly fork over an average \$3-\$5 at every club as people often do in bigger, more culturally diverse cities.

According to the answering machine of First Avenue, a Minneapolis night club, the venue charged \$6 for a DJ show Wednesday night.

Jill Smith is a bartender at the 1427 Club, 1427 O St., which has DJ shows on Thursday nights and charges \$2.

Smith said people in Lincoln are spoiled when it comes to the expense of going out on the town.

"People bitch about the \$2 cover charge," she said. "If they went to Chicago and wanted to get into a decent club, they'd have to spend \$10."

Kristen Bailey is a bartender at Knickerbocker's Tavern who has worked in bars in Seattle and also lived in Houston.

Are Lincolnites cheap about cover charges?

"Oh yeah, definitely," Bailey said. "When I worked at the Backstage in Seattle the cover charges were a minimum \$5. The whole time I worked there I never saw one person turn around and leave."

Andy Fairbairn is entertainment and promotions director at Duffy's Tavern.

Lincolnites generally would rather drink more alcohol than take a chance on a new band, he said.

"If they are going to get drunk, they're going to be apprehensive to give up the \$3 to \$5 they could spend at the end of the night," Fairbairn said. "Plus, they usually just want to see bands they've seen on TV."

Matt Ingle works the door at Duffy's on the bar's live music nights of Wednesday and Sunday.

He agrees with Fairbairn.

"They'll come in the door and say: 'Dude! Man! No way! I just want to drink,'" he said.

Even when it's about alcoholic overachievement, the subject comes back to a core of skimpiness.

"Sometimes they say they are just looking for a friend and will be right back," Ingle said.

"I'll have to go into the bar after 15 minutes and find them and make them pay. Lots of time they'll just leave rather than pay the cash."

Sean Tyrrell, part-owner of Knickerbockers, said it's hard to get people to pay to see musicians who are not famous.

This was evident Tuesday night when underground legend Helios Creed played Knickerbockers.

While the noisy rock band had played more than a dozen shows in Lincoln over the past decade, the 250-capacity room was less than half full.

Tyrrell was collecting the cover charge at Tuesday's show after one of the opening bands had just finished. A slew of leather-clad rock fans walked in, and one asked if he could pay a lesser cover since one band had already finished.

Something Tyrrell had said earlier that night came to life a little at that moment.

"Lincoln is cheap."