

ARTS

At the Metro Centre

Blue Rodeo shakes the crowd

by Jerry West

THE METRO CENTRE staff tried to affect an air of hominess for the January 25 Blue Rodeo concert. Unfortunately the shrouds they draped over unused sections only took away from a good concert.

At one point I wondered, if the crowd were to rush the colossal stage, could they all fit up there and still have room for the band? Anyone with a good arm could have hit the stage with a snowball from anywhere in the room (luckily it didn't come to that).

In spite of the reduced seating though, the room still felt like a large laboratory, or maybe a factory.

The opening act, the Skydiggers, did a solid job of preparing the crowd. Many of their guitar licks were borrowed though; echoes of Heart, Tom Petty and Bob Dylan, to name but a few. The most commonly identifiable sound was that of a sedate REM. Even the vocals were delivered with Michael Stipes's style, i.e. make it sound like you deliver the entire verse in a single breath.

Slow Burning Fire stood alone in its low, guttural harmonies as a sound to identify the band by.

In spite of the lack of a well defined "sound", the Skydiggers showed themselves to be very talented, entertaining showmen. Four of the five sang and their harmonies were quite impressive.

Lead Singer Andy Maize danced his way through every song with a funky mime style that occasionally worked the crowd to a fever pitch. At the end of their set Maize and drummer Wayne Stokes did a foot-stomping rhythmic patty-cake that was amazing for its precision and



Blue Rodeo's new album

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its ability to define musical beat.

The Skydiggers were definitely worth seeing. When they get the hang of writing their own songs it will undoubtedly be worth buying their albums.

After the break Blue Rodeo opened with The Joker is Wild, playing with an infectious energy that was to last through almost the whole concert.

When the long awaited rush for the stage did come the Metro Centre staff did an admirable job of containing it. Halifax police soon joined in and within two songs they had almost forced the crowd to sit passively back in their seats.

Dismayed by the moping and knuckle-dragging of the crowd, singer/guitarist Greg Keelor said "they're not going to hurt anybody". Momentarily perplexed, the police appeared to say "well...". That was all the crowd needed. Within seconds they were crushing themselves against the stage, and continued dancing until after the second encore.

My question remained unanswered though, since only one person made it up on stage and she was quickly escorted off.

Musically, Blue Rodeo showed a surprising versatility, from the

meandering Dime Store Greaser to a rollicking instrumental with hints of feedback. Variations on a theme from Riders on the Storm showed keyboardist Bobby Wiseman's formidable talents.

The most impressive thing had to be that guitarist Jim Cuddy could belt out the demanding vocals to Try, in a live concert, almost without flaw. For the final number two of the Skydiggers, Maize and Peter Cash, returned to the stage and harmonized with Blue Rodeo for the *Sun Won't Shine* by The Band.

The backdrop of the stage was the cover for the new album Casino. Under certain lighting the painting of clouds took on a very realistic depth. Once, the background was red with white columns of light emanating skyward. The surrealistic effect was reminiscent of the pictures of night bombing over Baghdad, and really made the room melt away.

For the most part the Metro Centre was very obvious in its bulk. When the band went into its "Elvis is looking down on you" attempt to psych up the crowd, the effect was lost on anyone not on the floor.

At the Pub Flamingo after the concert Keelor said of the venue "the room was just too big".

ATTENTION

ALL GRADUATES

There will be a

Grad Week Meeting:
FEBRUARY 5th

At 5:00 pm

Council Chambers
2nd floor

Student Union Building