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Mark Welner surfed into the Flamingo Club last week, riding the resurgent wave of guitar-hero worship. Next stop, USSR. Photo by the Group Collection/Dal Photo.

By MARK PIESANEN

Last Friday night at Club Flamingo I got a glimpse of things to come. Veteran street musician Mark Welner has come in out of the cold to form the *Westgore Rebels* and mount an assault on the Halifax club scene.

The *Westgore Rebels* (Pete Maddalena on bass and Jay Carmichael on drums) are a tight band, but their biggest attraction is Welner, a rock and roll guitar hero in the grand old tradition. Friday night's show was only the band's second gig, but Welner has a well developed personal style and enough presence onstage to make him one of this city's most exciting performers.

After years of watching him play

acoustic guitar on the street, it was a real treat to hear him in front of a band, and to watch him handle an electric guitar.

He can draw feedback out of his amp like a snake charmer, he uses effect pedals with grace and taste, he bends, twists and spanks his guitar and does all those little tricks that are revered by guitar worshippers.

The band plays a lot of Stones and Credence covers, but I was most impressed by Welner's original tunes. He has a definite talent for songwriting; toss him a buck and ask for, "Jet Trash" next time he's in front of the Seahorse and you'll see what I mean.

With his track from the Club Flamingo underground compilation getting airplay on CKDU

and Q104, and with two features on Much Music's Rock Flash (including Friday night's show) to his credit, things are starting to take off for Welner.

At the moment, the *Rebels* are looking for more gigs. "I'd love to play Domus," says Mark. "If any of them frats are looking for a rockin' band, we'll do it. Did you see me last week at Sam's? I ripped the roof off."

I've been watching this music thing for awhile now, and I believe that sooner or later it is going to be cool to be a guitar hero again. When it is, Mark Welner will be riding the crest of the wave. He's still got a few kinks to work out with the *Westgore Rebels*, but I'm tempted to say, "I have seen the future of the Halifax underground and it is Mark Welner."

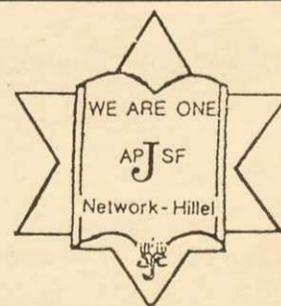
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