

CKDU benefit rocks the Green Room

by Tim Covert

After weeks of unearthly silence the Green Room awoke last Friday, pumping out high volumes of guitar and groove. The first gig of CKDU's tenth annual Funding Drive was an all-ages benefit featuring some of the very acts it has helped to promote. Four bands, four bucks was the cry as a sizable but subdued crowd took in Raleigh Sport, Universal Soul, Hip Club Groove and The Grace Babies.

Raleigh Sport opened up with their distorted, garage band style that has made their tape a scratchy favourite. The vocals were o.k. but they were quite strained. Sometimes that comes across as sincerity but in this case I wasn't really enamoured to it. It's too bad Raleigh Sport didn't perform the songs with backup vocals more often. It really helped out the lead vocalist and improved the music.

The drummer, Mike Catano, impressed me with his subtle fills and overall playing. He seemed almost bored with the music while the rest of the band was concentrating hard.

They put out a good set and the switching of instruments was a nice change. It's too bad they were working with ungrounded equipment. Zap!

Next up was Universal Soul, a hip-hop group who I've heard of over the last decade but never actually had a chance to see. My loss.

Voodoo and Fizz laid down some smooth, smart rhymes that differed greatly from the "gangsta" crap I hear these days. D.J. Joe Run, a relatively recent addition to the trio, threw out some incredible beats and samples, adding to the sound by precisely backing up the raps.

Afterwards Voodoo told me that the name of the group expresses their approach to music of finding their samples from as diverse a range of music as possible in order to give them a more universal sound.

A favourite of mine was a song with a sample of the classic "Stop Children!", but their whole set was great. "Video-cam" deals with the changing face of journalism and justice caused by the ability to instantly replay private life with the camcorder. Slick and topical.

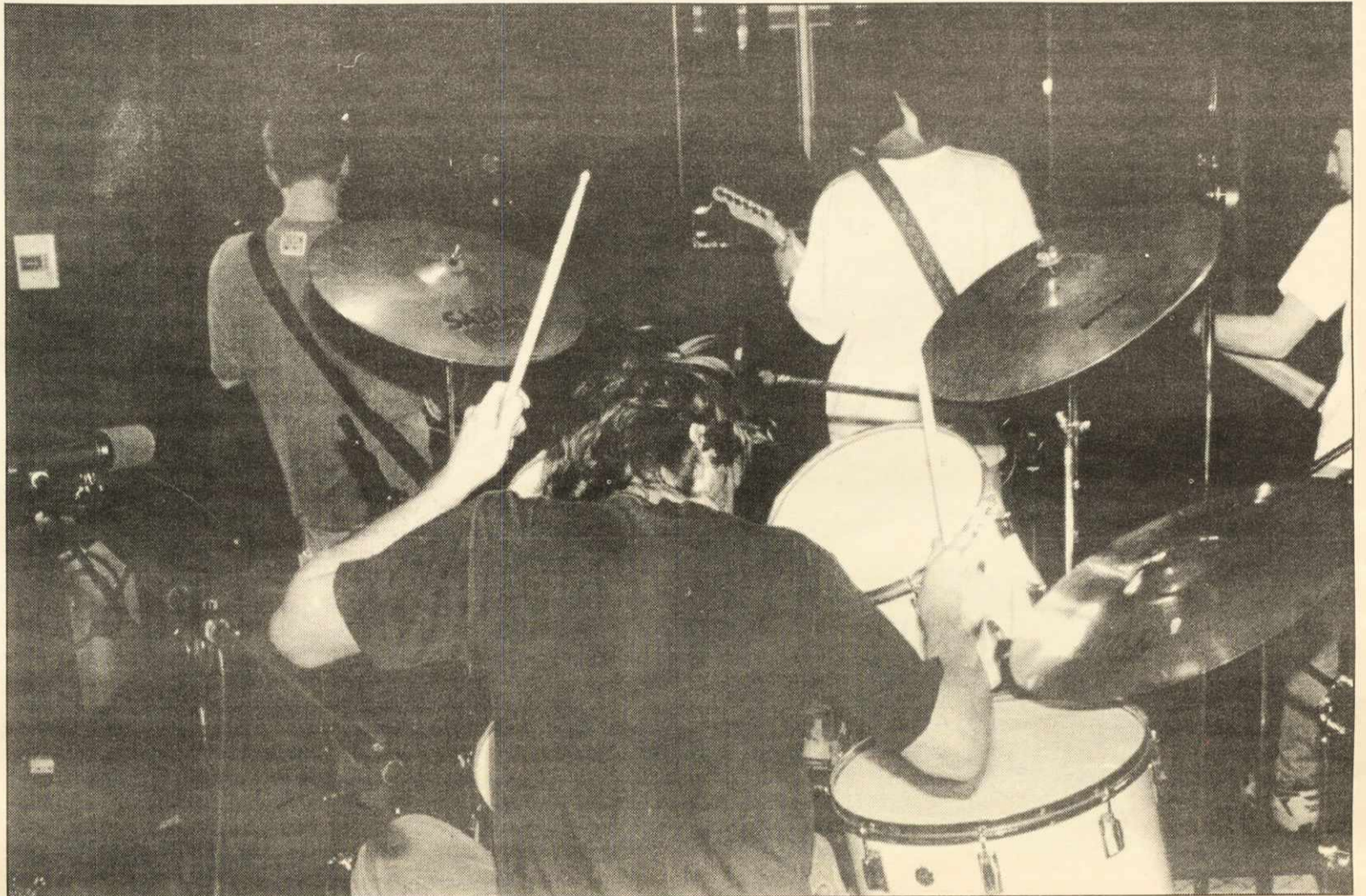
There was a great a cappella that if I had the authority to say so, would have declared Fizz (or Voodoo) the beat-box champion of the planet. Amazing!

These guys were energetic and funny but no one responded. With a more enthusiastic crowd they'd probably kick their performance into the stratosphere.

Hip Club Groove took to the stage as the second half of the hip-hop doubleheader. They were the headliners of the gig but due to scheduling one of the Grace Babies was unable to get to the gig until late so Chek, MacKenzie and Moves graciously went on third.

The trio gives incredibly entertaining performances and their shows just get better with time. Friday's show continued this pattern although not for the usual reasons.

The smart, funny rhymes were made hilarious by the chemically induced craziness of MacKenzie, who was jumping around more erratically than usual, knocking over his stand, and jokingly beating on Chek. Chek, to his credit, flowed smooth over the complex words, and kept his sense of



humour by saying in between songs things like, "I'm scared!" and "I'm going home!"

MacKenzie had a good performance for the most part despite his obviously increasing state of inebriation. During the "oh baby!" ending of "Bay Oh Fun-Day" (a really great track on their wicked Trailer Park Hip Hop) the two acted out the cheesy romance on the sample but at the end of it Mackenzie ended up body-slaming his partner in crime. Chek got him back later though when the drunken groover momentarily flopped out on the floor of the Green Room Pit and Chek jumped on him off the stage. The audience was roaring by this time.

The version of "Jizz" was excellent despite the absence of usual guest star Stinkin' Rich who was playing at the

bar benefit at the Oasis. But the highlight of the evening was unquestionably the free-style by Chek. It's usually pretty good but Friday's was incredible.

MacKenzie was parched (Gee, I wonder why?) and had asked for a glass of water. He first stopped his beat-boxing to take a drink leaving chek acappella for a few bars. He kept slowing down the beat yet Chek kept with him. When he finally died out Fizz from Universal Soul leapt on stage to take over and kicked the beat into overdrive. Chek never missed a beat.

Mackenzie started throwing ice around and this was worked right in: "Don't throw the ice, don't throw the ice, don't even try, it's all fun and games till someone loses an eye." Or something like that. Amazing! This generated the most applause of the entire night as everyone laughed and cheered.

What a great set. It's too bad it had to end with Chek knocking the turntable and ruining D.J. Moves's perfect night. But I honestly don't know how much longer MacKenzie could have lasted.

I was really disappointed with the people who didn't stick around to see the Grace Babies. With the amount of interest their release, *Duct Tape*, has been attracting I thought more people would stay to hear this new Halifax power pop foursome.

The band opened with their CKDU 'hit', "Superbright", which I really like, and then played a set of similar songs.

Great, up-front vocals keyed right in with well-placed harmonies and neat guitar hooks. The power pop sound isn't unique but I like the Babies. Combined with the skilled boppy drumming I could've bounced around to their whole set. However, my dislike of dancing by myself in front of a room full of people prevented it. Well, that's not completely true. The room was practically empty by the time the Grace Babies finished their set. And there were was one spontaneous four person mosh that lasted about 3 seconds. Ah, well.

It was a great show musically and the best part was that all profits were going to support CKDU. And we all, both the listeners and the bands who put on such a rockin', groovin', entertainin' gig to bring the Green Room back to life, owe the station as much support as we can give them.

The Grace Babies (above) and Hip Club Groove (below - up close and personal) rocked and rhymed the Green Room Friday along with Raleigh Sport and Universal Soul.

PHOTOS: JAMES BEDDINGTON

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