

entertainment

The Pinups: a return to rock 'n roll

By JOEY KILFOIL
Brunswick Staff

The Montreal-based band the Pinups played in town for four days earlier this week, and if their stage show and the sampling of original material are any indication, this band could well be one of Canada's major recording artists in a few years.

The band is fronted by David McNally on guitar and vocals and "Sass" on bass and vocals. On drums and occasional backing vocals is David Hazen while on keyboards and vocals is Vicki Vaughan. Their music represents a return to rock and roll's danceable, energetic, melodic best; as reflected in songs by the Who, the Rolling Stones, and the Kinks, to name a few.

The band originated in Montreal about three years ago. The Pinups' predecessor is a band called the News, which featured David Hazen on drums. When the band's bassist left, Sass was called up and asked to learn bass so she could join the band. Within a month and a half of picking up a bass guitar for the first time, Sass was playing clubs in Montreal with the News.

Shortly after this, the band's founder and singer-guitarist left and suggested David McNally as a replacement. Another guitar player in the band at the time had to be fired, said McNally, "due to loss of mental faculties."

Changing their name to the Pinups, the band set off on a tour of the Maritimes and played together as a three-piece until February of this year, when Vicki Vaughn, a long-time friend of Sass's was added to the lineup on piano, vocals, and occasional rhythm guitar.

The original four-piece version of the Pinups had a lot of success at the time, said David, and while they thought they were great, they were not ready to make it. David said he attributes the group's early success to good timing. He said they came out playing new wave before it was a dirty word and was just becoming very popular in Canada. Sass said it was an amazing experience for the whole band, as people were literally lining up around the block to see them and fans were constantly asking for autographs, waving posters and even looking for pieces of their hair and clothes. Vicki, who was an observer and not a member of

the band at the time, said the act not only featured new and exciting music but was very visual and extremely high-energy.

Although things looked good at the time, David said the band's first management company was not right for them and didn't really know what to do with them. In fact, he said, the band spent \$10,000 a couple of years ago on a demo tape that, despite superb production and engineering, did not represent the group accurately.

It was at this time that the group decided they needed a change in management, so they hooked up their current organization, Primal Motivations Inc. The company was founded by well-known Canadian disc jockey Doug Pringle and writer Martin Melhuish.

David, who is 22 years old, had a guitar in Grade four, but said he really didn't like playing it at the time. He began to take it more seriously in high school and switched from a cheap acoustic to a cheap electric. He said he had been writing songs constantly since his early teens and while he played lead guitar for a while, he eventually decided it was more important to develop a good rhythm style.

David's first real musical influence was Glen Campbell, whom he watched religiously when he was 10 years old. He was introduced to rock and roll through the Guess Who, after which he went through what he calls "heavy metal aggression music." He discovered the Who and the Beatles more or less after the fact, he said, as he only began listening to them seriously five or six years ago. He said Pete Townshend is his all-time favorite performer, something which becomes obvious as one observes his guitar playing. "The Who really invented heavy metal," said David.

Twenty-year-old Sass began singing when she was three. In her mid-teens she sang in a band with Vicki called Sweet Thunder. At this time her favorite performers were the Rolling Stones and David Bowie. Now she, like the other members of the band, list Cheap Trick as their favorite group.

Sass recalls the time her and Vicki met a couple of members of Cheap Trick a few years ago. They had just started their first major tour, opening for



The Pinups, left to right: David Hazen, Sass, David McNally, and Vicki Vaughan

Kiss, and they stopped in to a small club in Montreal where Sweet Thunder was playing. During the break, Rick Neilson introduced himself, saying he played with a band called Cheap Trick. "Oh really," Sass remembers asking, "do you guys play around town?"

Although she studied oboe and flute in high school, Sass said she gave up the oboe because the vibrations from it "were affecting my brain." She still plays the flute.

Asked about the concept of women playing in rock and roll, Sass said a lot of people still resent it because it was always a male domain, something which she understands. She said she always expected people to be a little surprised when they see a girl up on stage playing bass, but she said they are now not as surprised as she expected. As well, she said, she has learned to put up a barrier against leering and offensive comments.

Sass said the negative reaction to her playing with the band comes not so much from the audience but from other musicians. "What is this girl trying to prove?" is the attitude she encounters often.

David recalled a time when the band was playing in Trenton and he was talking to a couple of guys in the audience who didn't want to stay and see them play. Why?

"Because they didn't like the idea of girls playing instruments," he said. In fact, he said, while playing in Fredericton once, a musician from the audience came up to the group during a break and asked what the girl did. The band sarcastically told him that she was just there for looks and that they played a backing tape of bass lines. Sadly, said David, the fellow believed it.

In general, said Sass, there are fewer problems with the issue now. She describes women in rock as "a growing phenomenon" and said people are more readily accepting it.

Vicki, like the rest of the band members, is from Montreal, although she was the only one born there. She started studying piano when she was five and said she is probably one of the few young piano students who never had to be told to practice. In fact, she said, she had to be dragged away from the piano to go to bed. She said this is because she had three older sisters, all of whom studied piano. "And I couldn't bear to let any of them get any better than I was." She took lessons for 10 years but kept playing after the lessons stopped. Although she studied classical, she is really a long time rock music fan, she said.

Although she had never actually played the guitar, Vicki said she was always surrounded by guitars and when she joined the Pinups David taught her how to play the guitar

parts for the songs that would feature rhythm guitar.

Drummer David Hazen is originally from Oyster Bay, New York (Billy Joel's hometown). He studied drums seriously in high school and was in a number of bands, including rock and roll, jazz and school bands. He once won a special award for his drumming while in high school.

Hazen's playing on stage reflects the influence of his favorite drummer--Keith Moon. Other favorites include Ringo Starr, Charlie Watts and Max Wienberg of Bruce Springsteen's E. Street Band.

Following the completion of this leg of a Maritime tour, the Pinups will be returning to Montreal to cut a demo which, if it turns out right, said David, will be taken to Los Angeles by the group's managers. Although the band has been approached by several Canadian record labels, David said they were waiting for an international deal.

"We all want to make it very badly," said David. "But we're not going to scramble right now....we're going to wait until we're ready and do it right. We want to be the first Canadian band with a truly international identity."

Judging from the material --original and otherwise-- performed, the stage antics and the smooth energy of this week's performance, this band's time could well come very soon.