

ARTS

Mods steal show from Thieves at Dinwoodie



photo by Zane Harber

Lead singer of the Mods, a band on the move

by Dave Cox

Last Friday night I arrived at Dinwoodie expecting to hear some of the best in local reggae-flavored rock from one of my favorite local bands, *the Thieves*. I was also going to stick around to hear *the Mods*, the headline act.

I didn't think before the show that the latter group deserved such an honor, having seen them this summer at RATT and given them a somewhat lukewarm review in the

Summer Times (as all twelve of you who read it will remember). But after the show, I had to admit that on the occasion, the Mods were the better band.

The Thieves have been working hard in the studio recently putting together their part of the West Watch compilation album. As a result, they may not have practised together much recently. They also recently acquired a new drummer, who hasn't yet picked up the vital up-tempo beat that has been a hallmark of *the Thieves*' best material in past.

The band did not disappoint, however.

They fulfilled the primary duty of a warmup band—they got the crowd warmed up for the top-billed act. Unfortunately, the slide-and-recorded music synchronized section which was

supposed to materialize in the middle of their set suffered from equipment breakdown and failed to come off. The band still showed momentary flashes of their monster potential, which is growing all the time.

The Mods put on a dynamic show that kept the audience moving to the last minute. They perform a great choice of cover material, from the Jam to the Who to the Lambrettas ("Leap Before YOu Look" is a big favorite of mine.)

And this show, *the Mods* were much tighter and had their original material much better in hand. The performance showed the polish of a lot of work beforehand.

The Mods are maturing as a dance band: their lead singer seemed to almost give off sparks at times; and the instrumentals sound full and punchy, a difficult trick to manage with just a three-piece combo. Can they rise to greater fame than being a club band that does primarily Who covers? Time will tell, but for now the answer looks like yes.

The crowd at Dinwoodie was richly entertained, *the Mods* kept up the pace 'til long after the last unused beer ticket had been torn up; and everyone went home pleased at a high-energy, "mod" extravaganza.

ROUNDABOUT

Pith and Pathos
Don Freed
Bushleague Records

review by Jens Andersen

Well, this is a first-rate record if I ever heard one. Not that one can't find a few flaws with it. The record cover, for instance, suggests Freed is just another wimpy/sensitive folkie, as does the title, which I would have changed to *Pith and Vinegar* (why doesn't anyone consult me about these things?).

And Freed's quirky nasal voice, which is generally a delight to listen to, occasionally becomes a bit precious (as it does in "The Lessons in Ruins"), or somewhat unruly and abrasive (as happens in "A Really Hot Day").

But these are mere quibbles. Weighed against the album's virtues the flaws almost disappear. To begin with, Freed has an undeniable way with words:

*Little Wendy Jones
innocent and sweet
she got pregnant
from a toilet seat
got an abortion
in a laundromat
hey lover boy
What you think of that?*

And unlike so many songwriters whose talent begins and ends with words (if it ever gets that far) Freed is a tunesmith full of lovely melodies, and his guitar playing is clean, precise and tasty. In addition, on seven of the album's cuts he is assisted by various excellent backup musicians and singers, notably Rick Scott and Joe Mock of Pied Pear (Mock also produces).

As to the songs themselves, "Uranium" is an irresistibly bouncy number which should be on the playlist of any sensible radio station; "Poster Squad" is a hard-rocking tale of the secret police force in Ottawa which enforces the doctrine of "Post no bills" (the tune, if I remember rightly, is taken from the theme music of some old TV cop show); "Alberta Tarzans" eulogizes the leather-lunged men who brought hooting and howling into the consciousness of provincial concert-goers; "Old People in the Snow" is a lyrical song about the woes of the elderly, whose overall mournfulness, oddly enough, is heightened by the chortling of some Tarzans in the audience (the song was recorded at the South Side Folk Club) who apparently found the song's wry touches hilarious; "The Lessons in Ruins" - easily the best song on the album in spite of the fact that Freed strains a little too hard on it; and... but why list every song - they are all good and even the least of them has something to recommend it.

Freed is a prolific writer and I am sure he already has enough material for a third album: "I'm From the West and I Don't Know Nothing," "Polka Around Ponoka," "Vi's for Lunch," etc.

Not to mention his exuberant "Leo" anthem which he apparently wrote after his mother once told him, "Having a personality doesn't suit you."

Happy to say, his mother was wrong.
PS: Don't get the idea I want you to purchase the album, though. I would be happier if it made a quick jump into the delete bins, so that ten years down the line I can sell my copy and retire from this reviewer's rat-race on the proceeds.

Personal is universal

Ferron's songs beyond words

by Jack Vermeé

Ferron may well be the best folksinger in Canada.

There's no doubt left in this reviewer's mind as to the validity of that statement especially after having seen her in concert last Friday evening at the Provincial Museum Theatre.

To whom can she be compared? Bruce Cockburn at his folkie best never displayed the imagery and grasp of pure poetry that Ferron demonstrated here last week. Murray McLaughlan never had the gift of rhyme and melody found in Ferron's songs. And no one I've seen can match the way in which Ferron takes the painfully personal and makes it universal (and you thought reviews were supposed to be objective?)

Seeming more at ease than in her two previous Edmonton appearances, Ferron strummed and finger-picked her way through two sets of mostly old material. She punctuated

her emotion-laden ballads with very funny anecdotes and wry comments, creating an unusual mix of heartbreak, depression, and laughter. While ruefully stating that "The past should be forgotten as soon as possible," she demonstrated in her songs just how hard that can be.

Many of these songs ("Sadie", "Testimony", "Our Purpose Here") can only be called emotional "chunks" of her soul, striking in both their clarity and their depth. Throughout the evening she searched for, and eventually found (with "Ain't Life a Brook"), that mythical identification between audience and performer with the result being an emotionally true (dare I say "uplifting?") and satisfying evening of folk music.

After having read these words I was struck by how inadequate they are. In Ferron's case no review can do justice to the feelings generated by her concert performance. If you only go to one folk concert per year, I suggest you make Ferron your choice.

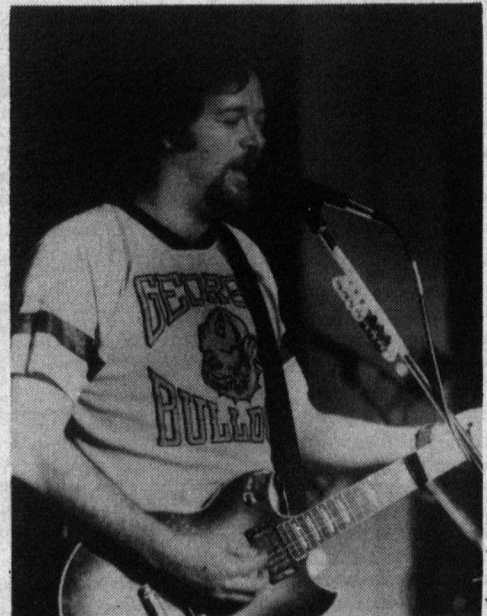


photo by Bill Ingles

Aging rocker Jerry Doucette still got an ovation in RATT Friday night.

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