



The Extras—left to right; Michael St. Clair, Leon Stevenson and Denis Keldie

MICHAEL SAINT CLAIR GUITARS LEON STEVENSON VOCALS

EXTRAS

By BARRY WALSH

Canadians seem to have begun taking a liking to home-grown musical acts in the past few years. Many Canadian bands, such as M + M and the Spoons have enjoyed respectable success within our borders and have gained attention from other markets as well. Indeed, the time is right to be a Canadian new music act.

One such act that is beginning to prove this theory is The Extras. Hailing from Toronto, Leon Stevenson (lead vocals and percussion) and Denis Keldie (keyboards) began The Extras as primarily a songwriting/recording duo. In the past few years and with the addition of three new permanent members, Stevenson and Keldie have transformed the act into a tangible, active band that definitely matches or surpasses the vitality of other successful Canadian bands.

Stevenson and Keldie have been recording together under The Extras moniker since 1981. Using different musicians each time, they have released three albums and an EP on Ready Records—*Bit Parts*, *Road to Zambando*, *The Watcher*, and their latest LP, *Extrapolis*.

With *Extrapolis*, guitarist Michael St. Clair has joined as a permanent member, adding a new dimension to the sound of The Extras. The result is a pleasing, accessible collection of dance-oriented songs that should do well on radio.

Last weekend, The Extras appeared at the Misty Moon as the opening act for Rough Trade. Accomplishing what many opening acts find difficult, The Extras brought the large crowd to their feet with exuberant new tunes and amazing rejuvenated versions of their earlier songs. *Turning It Out* and *Jealous Girl* from their first album, *Bit Parts*, were especially-jumpy and the pace did not slow down at all during their set.

During their brief stay in Halifax, Stevenson and Keldie chatted about The Extras the the successful steps they've taken to mould their project into a band to be watching.

One such successful step is the bold step they've taken to ensure that The Extras' first big foray into the world of video is worth taking. Their first video from the new album, for *Can't Stand Still*, will also be the first fully animated

video by a Canadian band. Peter Sander, famous for his work on *Yellow Submarine* and *Heavy Metal*, approached the band with the idea.

"He thought that he could do something quite original with the song. He showed us his story board and we were blown away. As it turns out, the whole project has become bigger than we expected. The latest thing that I have heard is that Peter has eleven different animators working seventy hours a week on it," said Stevenson.

The video is being produced with the assistance of VideoFACT and should be seen on Much Music within the next few weeks.

The band is also making yet another move into a new field—movie soundtracks. *Jealous Girl* was used in last year's *Hardbodies*; this time The Extras were approached to contribute six songs to another *Porky's* style film extravaganza, entitled *Loose Screws*. Although Stevenson and Keldie both dismiss the film as "just another teen exploitation film", they are both pleased to be working on the project. Says Stevenson, "It's good for the pocketbook and it's

also very good experience. Also, the film should reach a young audience, and that's further exposure for our music."

This number of projects should help bring one of the goals of the band to reality. States Keldie, "We basically want to be regarded as a band, as opposed to being just a songwriting team, which is essentially what we were before."

The Keldie-Stevenson partnership began at Food City, a Toronto supermarket, where both were bagging clerks. Keldie's playing experience and Stevenson's writing abilities merged when both were played in B.B. Gabor's last band. Eventually, Denis and Leon entered the recording business on their own, became The Extras, and were signed by Ready Records, a record company that was, in 1981, just beginning to make its presence felt outside Toronto. The Extras released their debut album, *Bit Parts*, to moderate success in Canada, with a hit single in *Jealous Girl*. The band followed this up with *Road to Zambando* and the single from that LP, *Turning It Out*, was also charted nationwide. From here, Keldie and Stevenson,

after touring with a group of musicians, recorded an EP entitled *The Watcher*. At this point, the two became slightly bored with recording and touring with new musicians every shot, and decided to achieve something solid and concrete—a true band.

Stevenson states, "We went through many experimental phases with our music, mainly because we wanted to try new things. We'd work with different musicians from week to week, and in a live situation, we'd never sound anything like our records because of all the different combinations and interpretations of the songs".

Guitarist Michael St. Clair entered the picture with the recording of *Extrapolis*, and for the Eastern Canada tour, the trio hooked up with a super-cohesive rhythm section that appears to be a permanent fixture as well. This combination looks like it will be the one that we'll be seeing for a while yet, and, indeed, it sounds like many good things are possible. According to Stevenson, "Now the entire band is dictating the direction in which we're headed, which is dance-oriented pop, for the moment."