

# Backstage with the boys in The Band

By WENDY SWITZER

It had to be The Band. No other reason could explain why five hippies were checking in at the Inn on the Park at two in the morning.

The lobby was devoid of all conventional people (excluding myself, and I was in an advanced state of inebriation,) yet had the room been jammed to the doors, one would still have been able to discern the inimitable quintet.

Although the straight desk clerk had no other thought in his head, other than the hope that these guests would be able to pay their bill, I immediately recognized them, and proceeded to fall all over them. I knew then that it had to be The Band.

The Band is Levon Helm, Robbie Robertson, Rick Danko, Garth Hudson and Richard Manuel, and any good teeny-bopper can recite the boys' home towns, their former occupations, and their fathers' occupations.

Because right now, The Band is

the most popular, most discussed and most publicized of all rock groups, having appeared in newspapers, on radio interviews, on T.V., and in every magazine from Time to Vogue.

Each step of their lives, from their backwoods beginnings to their present concert success, is covered so thoroughly by the press, that it becomes common knowledge to anyone who picks up a newspaper.

In light of their current status, it shouldn't be too hard for anyone to imagine how I felt when I picked up the phone the next morning, and heard a drawl informing me that "This here's The Band."

I was then invited to live the dream of every groupie: to spend the day with her favorite group. And what a group!

The first activity was the pre-concert sound check at Massey Hall. Every bit of the excitement was there, but the tense nerves that one would expect to find in performers were completely ab-

sent. Perhaps this is because the boys are a bit older, and have been around longer than the average rock idols.

There is a contagious aura of confidence about The Band. It is not the first-night fright of novices ("But there's people out there!"), nor is it the cultivated arrogance of pill-poppers who grab thousands of dollars a night, but it is the simple belief which comes from thinking that this night's concert isn't going to be any different from playing before the family in Woodstock.

It was this confidence that caught the boys in the middle of the sound check, and prompted them to pick up, let the British-imported Wem sound equipment look after itself, and go over to The Colonial to catch Cannonball Adderley's next set.

The relaxed quality of their work, and their unhurried way of performing it, carries over into their everyday life. Nothing fazes them, they are not pretentious, and they have no illusions about themselves.

With the exception of Robbie, and the addition of John, The Band's Princeton-educated road manager, we arrived at the concert in a Hertz rented car, which is about as unostentatious as one can get.

Nevertheless, the inevitable autograph-hunters recognized them, and descended locust-like upon them. The grapes were sour that night: as it was late, and the fans were refused, one of them sneered: "Aw, you're nothing but a bunch of hicks." Levon turned to him and Arkansas-drawled in reply: "That's just what we are, baby. That's exactly what we are. But you're the one who wants the autograph."

Inside, the backstage area was overrun by people connected to the

rock business — the press, Capitol Record Company luminaries, local deejays, and countless hangers-on. Oblivious to the crowd, The Band left them to the comforts of free Scotch and each other, and retired to the dressing room, in favor of the company of close friends and relatives.

The Capitol promoter announces to the group that they are on in five minutes, but this remark has no apparent effect on the boys. They move casually to the stage, and the impression of serenity they give is an exact opposite to the harried one presented by Manager John, who is frantically signalling lighting directions to his technical crew.

In concert, The Band seems to have forgotten that they are playing for two capacity crowds of 2,800 each. They are aware of each other and of no one else.

Robertson and Danko remain on lead guitar and bass, respectively, while Helm, Hudson and Manuel alternate among drums, organ, piano, clavinet, sax and a mandolin. They switch instruments and vocal parts as easily as they made the switch five years ago from romping with Ronnie Hawkins to rocking with Bob Dylan.

Their wide range of talents is extended over to the diversity of their tastes in clothes. Only a member of The Band would appear on stage wearing old, skin-tight Levi's straight from Thrifty's, and then top it with a \$35 ultra-fashionable shirt from Lou Myles.

Backstage again. The show is over; the fans and reporters are converging on the dressing room en masse, and The Band is quietly making their exit from Massey Hall, (a fact not realized by the fans until some time later).

Driving back up to the hotel, the

boys are busy devising ways to allow themselves a few extra hours of sleep before they leave for McMaster University the next day. They are dead tired, but sleep will not come just yet — there will be another party at the hotel.

"Well, maybe we'll just feed everybody, and they'll go home," Richard suggests. Richard along with Robbie and Rick, is thinking of his family back in Woodstock, N.Y. Levon is thinking about the quiet of the country and his fireplace at home. And Garth — well, it's always hard to tell exactly what Garth is thinking.

Like other entertainers, The Band dislikes one-night stands, and the exhaustion that accompanies them. But Toronto is different: it was home to them for ten years, and they are anxious to reform the opinions of fans disappointed by them at last summer's Pop Festival.

(The disappointment was due to the complete breakdown of the sound equipment during The Band's performance.)

Judging by the reactions of this night's audience — and the subsequent favorable reports of the Toronto papers — they had completely erased any bad memories.

The audience changes, the hall changes, the groupies and hangerson change — but in essence, the boys in The Band remain the same. It may sound trite, even corny; then again, these five tend to say and do a number of things which any esteemed Toronto's swinging set would dismiss as being too backwoods-hick to be for real. Nevertheless, by standing firm against the changing winds of "groove", The Band has created their own "groove" — a super-groove.

They can do it. After all, they are THE Band.

MR. JOSEPH A. FRIEDMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPS

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Besides these programmes, there will be such things as drama workshops, film showings, sports events, and discussion groups on students' personal problems. If you are interested in participating in this experiment by leading a discussion group on any topic of your interest contact one of the following people:

Bram Cadsby — 787-6516, 28 Hilltop Rd., Toronto.

Rochelle Soupcoff — 783-6692, 43 Ridelle Ave., Toronto.

## Moody Blues fuse soft rock with classical in fourth album

By STEVE GELLER

Early in 1965, The Moody Blues, with their worldwide hit single, Go Now, became the most wanted name in pop music. As they were unable to produce another selling single, they dropped out of sight in the pop scene in North America (except for a brief appearance on one of our leading cola commercials) and seemed to be destined for the underground taverns of misfortune in England.

In 1967, after a two year absence from a changing music field, the Moody Blues emerged from a London recording studio with a new sound, a sound that was to extend the range of pop music, joining it with the world of classical music. Their style of fusing a soft rock composition with classical writing has given the Moody Blues their fourth great album, To Our Children's Children's Children.

With Children, as in their previous material, the Moody Blues have created an album where the lyrics of a modern rock group and the beauty of a symphony orchestra feed on each other's inspiration resulting in a majestically moving piece of art.

The sounds of the orchestra are created by the use of a mellotron, an intricate machine with pre-recorded tapes, which, when systematically activated, can emulate the sounds of whatever instrument may be needed for a specific effect.

The structure of the album's content resembles that of a rock opera in theme only. There is no overture, prologue or finale. The album's historical recollect of our age is brought out in a subtle manner, the result of the soft, flowing music with its poetic lyrics.

With Higher and Higher, an artistic introduction by Graeme Edge, man's 20th Century space odyssey is centred upon with the moon landing acting as a lyrical centrifuge. "Climbing to tranquillity far above the cloud/ Conceiving the heaven clear of misty shroud/ Rising to tranquillity seeing its real worth/ Conceiving the heavens flourishing on Earth."

Cuts such as Gypsy and Eternity Road depict the insecurity and uncertainty of modern day youth who, left without hope, frozen in an emptiness of a forever changing time, must search to find a peace of mind.

Candle of life, the most gracious song on the album, is a comment on the quickly existing emotion of love from the world and the social alienation problem. The beauty of the mellotron mixed with steady but light piano, drum and guitar work and soft lyrics make this particular track the most moving on the album. "Something you can't hide/ Says you're lonely/ Hidden deep inside/ of you only. . ."

With Eyes of A Child, the Moody Blues offer the hope that in the future love will exist universally. The achieving and strengthening of love can only be

begotten by an open-minded attitude towards life and a general naive childlike willingness to accept the now day.

To Our Children's Children's Children is a moving blend of creativity and emotion, flowing with a musical richness and dealing with the accomplishments, shortcomings and hopes of our generation.

Martin Onrot is bringing the Moody Blues back to town for another concert at Massey Hall at the beginning of March.

## Around town...

**THE HAWK'S NEST:** This Saturday and Sunday night the Hawk's Nest will play host to one of Canada's foremost recording groups, The Collectors. After their hit of a few years back, Look At a Baby, The Collectors, who originally hail from Vancouver, went south to make the big time before returning to their native homeland. The Collectors were also chosen to represent Canada in the Canadian Pavilion at Japan's upcoming Osaka 70.

**GLOBAL VILLAGE:** Located on 17 St. Nicholas Street (just behind Sutton Place) with its coffee shop atmosphere, the Global Village remains one of the few places in the city where commerciality and exorbitant prices do not prevail. Every weekend Global Village presents Platform — continuous live entertainment from 10 p.m. till dawn. On Fridays jazz and dixieland music is featured, while Saturday sees continuous rock, pop and folk jams. The price of admission is \$3.00 per couple. This Saturday night, from 8:30 to 10:15 p.m., Hyde, Toronto's newest singing personality will be in concert. His style and format is that of a very heavy folk sound. An advance ticket of \$2.00 includes admission to Platform, going from 10:15 p.m. to the wee hours of the morning.

**THE ELECTRIC CIRCUS:** Contrary to a few misguided rumours, the Circus is quite alive and kicking on weekends, this week hosting a group called Life and Creation.

**RIVERBOAT:** One of the best in the blues business, John Lee Hooker makes a one week Toronto stop and will be followed by McKendrie Spring.

**MASSEY HALL:** The Byrds fly in for one concert only on Sunday. Also appearing will be Teagarden and Van Winkle and Maurey Haden.

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