

Back to Cabbagetown Café

Band's Moondog Matinee deals in memories

by DYNAMITE C. STRANGE
If anybody has a right to reminisce about the glory days of rock and roll and rhythm and blues, it has to be the Band.

As just about everybody knows, the Band was once the Hawks, back-up group to ex-patriate rockabilly high roller Ronnie Hawkins, and as such paid more than their share of dues pounding out the sleazy bar circuit from Toronto on down to the deep South.

Although they later became Dylan's backing band and cut some sides of their own (as Levon and the Hawks), the roots remained firm and always present.

In Moondog Matinee (named after the old dj radio show), the Band presents a tasty collection of past greats, almost-weres and pieces of personal memorabilia. Throughout,

the group has infused the old material with its own brand of earthy country soul, and the result is more than just a tired rehash of old songs and individual nostalgia.

Included is an even balance of upbeat numbers: Chuck Berry's Promis-

ed Land, Fats Domino's I'm Ready and Elvis' Mystery Train, and ballads like the Platters' The Great Pretender. The list is capped off with a couple of quasi-religious pieces, Save and A Change is Gonna Come which re-affirm, however offhandedly, the

Band's sense of rural self-righteousness.

The Band hasn't done these numbers just for the sake of getting another album out. Almost every song (with the exception of the incongruous movie instrumental Third Man Theme) takes on new meaning through the injection of the Band's own earnest professionalism and impeccable musicianship.

In spite of the throwback paraphernalia which adorns the album's jacket, replete with references to the Band's early days in Toronto (Cabbagetown Café, Hawk Shop, etc.), Moondog

Matinee is an assured look back — funky and full of life, with a touch of conscious humour often lacking in the Band's recent efforts.

Detractors among the faithful may object that Moondog Matinee, coming as it does after the live Rock of Ages, is yet another step away from any constructive interest in creating new material, and that the Band has run out of original material.

There may be some truth in this, but we'll have to wait until the next album to find out. For now, stop-gap or not, Moondog Matinee will do just fine.

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