

Modern Minds struggle to succeed



The Modern Minds are in Dinwoodie Friday, tickets are available from the Bears Ski Team, in HUB and CAB.

Likely as not, most people in Edmonton resign themselves to local entertainment being sluggishly amusing. However, the locale is not devoid of innovative music, rather established music interests stifle any group daring to play original material. For example, vital new groups like the Modern Minds have had to struggle to find bookings and recording opportunities. However, the Minds' situation is improving and rewarding venues like their Dinwoodie booking this Friday, sponsored by the Bears ski team, are becoming frequent.

In general though, the established hotel and music agency monopoly is encouraging new groups to create their own audiences and recording arrangements. A major obstacle to this trend is, not surprisingly, a meagre cash flow. Lars Wanagas, owner of Homestead Recorders, and manager of the Minds, cites meagre earnings preventing his group from more extensive travel.

In any case, the question remains why an energetic band like the Minds, playing original music, should struggle?

The band is good: the Minds' music, a new-wave blend of original and classic

rock and roll can raise the energy level of any audience. However, one obstacle to progress are government controls that discourage the formation of an active club scene capable of fostering cheap and original entertainment. Government liquor controls have prevented clubs springing up where original bands can perform and audiences can frolic without fearing the bouncer's boots.

The Minds point out hotels, not surprisingly, would fear a successful club scene because of its potential competition. Also, the bar manager's existing control over entertainment is based on the idea quiet sullen crowds are better booze consumers.

In total, one tends to agree with Berg when he declares, "The whole bar scene in Alberta is so bad" and adds places like the touted Riv Rock Room are "the least horrible" of the lot. Upright points out "the people with large investments hold power" and suggests to create a vital music scene would harm the established music situation.

The hotel industry is not the only obstacle to innovative music. The Minds' music with its new wave and sixties mod influence is nothing wholly original. It's

basic and the band hopes "relevant". They claim to draw on "third hand influence". Still, convention here means playing what's on the radio, hardly a fulfilling situation for imaginative performers. Original work, one supposes, is not a safe investment for the hotel kings.

In spite of the dangers, the band, according to Upright, is "going all the way on our feelings about what we do." Consequently, they claim not to have compromised their music in order to achieve quick success by playing standard material. Upright goes on to berate other bands for "taking advice from a bunch of nobodies" and "doing something now in hopes of future stardom.they sacrifice their now for the future and in lots of cases they only have a slim chance." Berg points out "the hierarchy and business dictates to young bands a formula — do this and you'll be stars." Again, he points out "these people (agents) have a zero success rate."

Certainly the difficulties caused by the Minds' unconventional priorities are balanced by some other consideration. Although Upright states the band has "no set-down policy" on what they want to accomplish bassist Bob Drysdale mentions, "We want to communicate something." Berg adds, "We want to fulfil ourselves creatively and deliver the music." It appears the band has decided to seek their satisfaction first rather than rely on slim hopes for success by first pleasing the usual music interests.

One thing is certain to result from Homesteads' and the Minds' ventures though. New groups need not cluster in the established music stables.

Studios like Wanagas' Homestead will record new acts like the Minds and also attract established ones. Someday Edmonton will be able to support innovative music as well as football or hockey, but now at least the necessary structures are being built.

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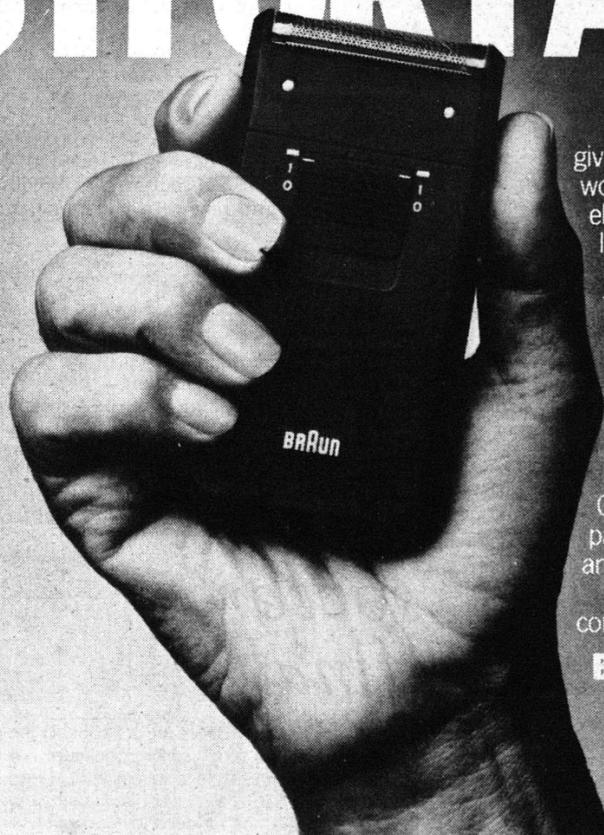
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