

# ENTERTAINMENT



Photos by Chris Hunt

## The Hype

promises good things

*Party for the Planet reviewed*

By Kwame Dawes

The Hype, a new Fredericton band had their debut in the Social Club on Thursday night last week. The show was billed as a "party for the planet" and was organized by the UNB Environmental Society. The club was quite crowded, and typically, as the night tumbled along the patrons became more and more enthusiastic about the music.

Opening the show were a number of folk and blues acts which included Messo Blues, a guitar and harp duo; Brigit Sullivan and Guy Guitard and a female singer who performed a number of folksy tunes with the phrasing and delivery of Joni Mitchell. These acts were marred by very poor sound. The acoustic guitars were tinny and the vocals thin and diffused.

Brigit Sullivan is a strong singer and I am impressed at the way in which her range and confidence have improved in the past few years. On Thursday night she tackled songs that allowed her to exploit that range to good effect. Guy Guitard's guitar playing was fittingly sparse as he supported Ms. Sullivan. His electric guitar picking on the Tracy Chapman number was tastefully done.

Messo Blues are essentially a couple of jaunty youngsters who play a funky up blues inspired type of music which is fine is the Blues foundation is solid. With Messo Blues, one is not certain that this is the case. Their work is more akin to rockabilly than it is to the swampy kind of blues one is used to hearing. The harp player in the duo is quite an accomplished artist and he showed tremendous dexterity on the instrument. I found, though that their renditions lacked the angst of the true blues. If they would just slow it down and let the backbeat take over, while the harp wails in heartfelt proclamation of the blues, they would have impressed me more. With the vocal mics eating up any definition in the songs one had the impression that they were listening to two instrumentalists. Messo Blues should slow down a bit and then let the rhythm seep into their entire beings - then they can really let it rip.

The sound was markedly better for The Hype perhaps because they are a more electric unit. They are a five piece band (bass guitar, lead guitar, drums, acoustic guitar and lead vocals) in which four of the instrumentalists are competent singers. They are fronted by talented singer Troy Cloney who has worked with a number of acoustic groups in Fredericton for many years. There is little doubt that Troy can sing. He has a remarkable range and he handles covers

It is too bad that much of their performance was distorted by the poor sound system.

with the care for authentic reproductions that one would expect from a method actor. On stage, Troy is less dynamic than one would want him to be. Much of the energy on the stage was provided by the lively Steve Cole who played acoustic guitar, did a smattering of lead singing, back-up singing and harp playing to boot.

Steve Cole is no harp player,.... yet. He should give that embryonic talent some time to mature before sharing it with us. What he is, though, is an infectious showman. Watching Steve Cole on stage, one is convinced that the music is great and that the world is really having a good time. He brings to the band, the same energy and contact with the audience that his acoustic duo No Effects has brought to the Social Club time and time again. Musical brilliance plays second fiddle to energy and enthusiasm.

The band covered tunes from 54-40, Bruce Cockburn, REM and The Doors (?) to name a few. While the list may sound eclectic, the actual songs performed indicates that they seem to be aiming for a style that parallels the now popular Canadian musical trend of full blown harmonies, and a kind of folk/rock fusion not unlike the music of the Beatles with a harder edge.

It is a sound that combines the vocal styling of 54-40 and Blue Rodeo with the drive of The Tragically Hip and REM. With four strong singers and a lead guitarist who is steady if not flashy, the formula may pay dividends here in Fredericton where there are few bands that have sought to capture this style.

The band performed one original

number and it stood up well in the company of the other cover tunes. There was something refreshing about the release that the tune gave the the lead guitarist (who wrote the song). For a debut performance the band showed very encouraging cohesiveness. There were some messy moments when the drummer seemed to have misunderstood the speed of the Pink Floyd classic "Comfortably Numb." Steve Cole, completely relaxed in such situations simply quipped into the microphone with a grin "Steroids" and all was forgiven.

The Hype should write more material and make a definite effort to wean that material into their act at each show. If they don't do this we will tire of them and they themselves will find that the motivation to continue working out of this city will dwindle rapidly. On Thursday night I couldn't say I was blown away, but I was left with the distinct impression that these guys could do well, very well.

One expects that a band of this nature will get work around town. If you hear of a gig with The Hype, try not to miss it. = you may be surprised.