

MEAT

Blue Rodeo Fails to Impress

by Chris Hunt &
Alastair Johnstone

While I did not personally feel that Bob Lambert deserved notice, Alastair decided he would like to vent some of his anguish and frustrations on the content and quality of the opening act for Blue Rodeo last Friday night:

"Piss me off, ya fuckin' jerk" - Bob Lambert, with his style of raunchy humor managed to do exactly that. While much of his material was exceedingly funny, when he turned it to racial slurs, sexist comments and homosexual cracks, he quickly crossed the line of what can be considered socially acceptable. Looking around me, I couldn't help but notice that a woman standing next to me, and of the same ethnic persuasion as the butt of one of Lambert's particular "jokes" wasn't laughing - in fact she was in tears. Mr. Lambert, while your particular brand of humor may be acceptable at a KKK rally, it has no place on the campus of a university. Nuff said.

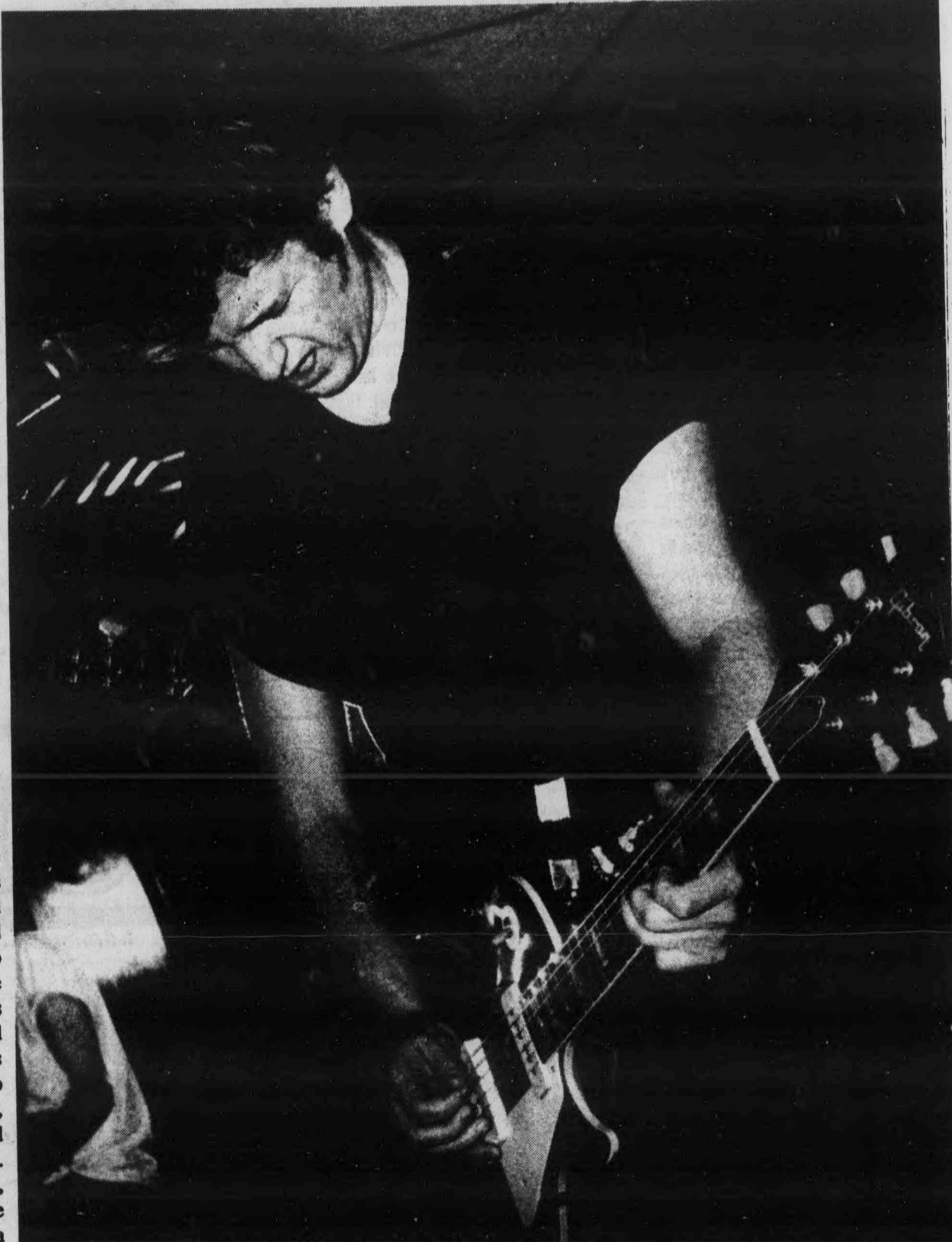
Well, now that Alastair has set the stage, I'll pick up the torch and throw it at the main event of the night, Blue Rodeo.

This has truly been an unprecedented year (in my few years here anyway) for entertainment on campus. We have seen a huge variety of music performed here, from the big to the small, from the talented to the talentless, from the interesting to the mundane, and from one end of the spectrum to the other. The Northern Pikes, 54.40, Jeff Healey, Scarecrow, National Velvet, Barney Bentall, The Pursuit of Happiness, Crash Vegas, Spirit of The West, The Flamingo Kid and many others have given their best at the Social Club, the Cafeteria, the Ballroom, the Aitken Centre, and other venues. No fault can be cited on anyone this year for efforts to bring bigger and better musical entertainment to the U.N.B. campus. Some events were fantastic, some flops, some good and some mediocre. What makes an event a good one? What are the criteria for a 'great' show? It seems obvious to me that more people will make an effort (particularly in this, the City of Stately Apathy) to spend their hard-loaned government money and undoubtedly academically-filled time to get out and see, say, Richard Marx over someone actually talented like Spirit of The West. One would also assume that a concert on a Friday or Saturday night would likely be

more attractive to the studious and dedicated student. People in numbers is, however, not the main issue. What is it that makes people come out of a show and want to tell all their friends what a great show they missed? This is the area that falls almost entirely on the band itself. Sure, some might say that the sound was bad, or it was too crowded, but I have a hard time believing that playing through six-inch cardboard speakers on a tiny stage in a packed, smoky bar in any way affected the speed with which a band like the Beatles vaulted to playing the Ed Sullivan show; if your music is worth something, and more importantly, if you believe in it, and communicate that, you have the essential elements for a 'great' show.

Thus we come to my analysis of why so many disappointed faces trudged (and staggered - GST hasn't hit the \$1.75 beer price yet) up to the Social Club last Friday night after the Blue Rodeo concert to drown their sorrows, after paying \$10.70 (the GST did hit here) to watch a truly great Canadian band look and sound like tired, bored musicians who were playing in some god-forsaken hole like Fredericton. I know Fredericton is small, insignificant, and isolated here in the armpit of Canada, and you know that, and Blue Rodeo knows that, but it really gets the old goat when it is assumed that as a result of this, our hard-earned \$10.70 is somehow not worth as much as someone else's who happens to live in Toronto. Okay, so they're tired. Okay, they've had a hard day. It's not okay, dammit. You claim the kind of prestige, power and marketability that Blue Rodeo does and I expect to see a show that is as good as you can give. I have played in bands and while I do not claim to have the experience of day after day road trips and shows in Moosepiss, Idaho at the Buffalo lodge, I can say there have been times that I just wasn't up to playing and giving my all. You do it anyway. That's what a live show is.

Musically, I think Blue Rodeo is one of the healthiest things to happen to Canadian music in a long time, their distinctive, twangy sound and sweet harmonies have been a huge influence on the artists in Canada, creating the foundations for a truly new Canadian sound, combining prominent elements from many areas into a recognizably unique and innovative edge. Man, it's hard to admit that after suffering with them on



SHH!! Don't snore so loudly buddy, you're ruining the song!!

Friday night. A truly uninspired conglomeration of their latest and past albums, the show blew off Blue Rodeo's hits like they were merely middle cuts on a compilation album. "Try", "I Am Myself" and "How Long" came and went with little notice, and their one, mechanical effort to extend and develop a song, namely "Diamond Mine" came off sounding like a Door's cover (one girl next to me actually turned to a friend and asked: "Don't the Doors do this song?"). Come on guys, the bass player is chewing gum for god's sake and the normally excited, innovative and animated keyboard player looks like he's playing dirges at a funeral.

The sound was abysmal. Apparently there was not even a sound check, and informants tell me that the show started late because one of the band members didn't know where they were playing because he hadn't seen the stage yet. Some say you cannot blame sound quality on the band. Screw that. If you really care about your music you make sure (within the limits of your budget) that the sound is right, especially if you are as big as Blue Rodeo; you should be able to afford to have someone on the sound board who can tell the difference between vocals and kick drums (arguably you can't afford not to). Little effort was made during the show to correct the

glaringly incompetent errors (little to no vocals, muddied middle, no high end, the list continues) in the sound mix.

A live band is visual as well as auditory, and here again the efforts to put on a pleasing show were ignored, and if I were really cynical, I would even say they were bad enough to have been purposeful. A pitiful light show, no stage backdrop - were they trying for some kind of minimalist art thing? - I think not. The elements were all there; A good sound system, a good band, a good crowd. All that was wrong with this show was the attitude. Guys, get one before you come back to this small but appreciative university, please.

by Luis Cardo
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