

Entertainment

"Put your camel to bed."
-Maria Muldaur-

Colin Linden...

Paradise in Limbo

Stuart Ross

The fat, music-hungry little kid got to the Colonial hours early. He waited until he finally spotted the massive black guy sitting in a corner. He got up, sliced his way through the smoke, stood in front of the man, and said, "Mr. Wolf, you're my hero."

As Colin Linden, now 20 and a virtual legend, tells me the decade-old story, he pulls from his pocket a crumpled colour Polaroid and puts it on the table. Sure enough, there he is, beaming proudly beside his greatest inspiration, Howlin' Wolf.

"And when I met Wolf," Linden remembers, "I decided, 'Yeah, there's nothing else I wanna do besides play music.' We talked for a few hours, and from then on, until he died about five years later, we met every time he came into town."

Linden's accomplishments since that first meeting have been many. He began playing blues and ragtime publicly at the age of 12. By the time he was 14, he was playing bars, and the year after, he made his historic pilgrimage.

"Me and Jim MacLean went through the whole South, to Mississippi, trying to find old blues players. We were so into the music and had absorbed so much of it, that we just wanted to be where it was. And it was an incredible experience."

"We found tons of them, and they were really nice to us. They took us into their homes and we learned and played a lot of music."

After gaining quite a reputation for himself in blues, and playing with David Wilcox and The Teddy Bears, Linden transformed his acoustic guitar into an electric, and

studied rock'n'roll with the same passion.

When he was 17, he led his first band, The Lucky Charms. Says Linden, "I'd only played very small amounts with bands, so I spent a couple of months learning how to play lead guitar and then I called up the owner of the Horseshoe Tavern and played him a tape that I had made in the studio. I played him this tape in his car and I talked over all the mistakes, so he wouldn't hear them and he hired me. So I called up every member of the press and told them that I had the hottest band in town. All this before I knew whether I could lead a band and before I any original material."

Linden has played with Leon Redbone, Mendelson Joe, Amos Garrett, the amazing Preacher Jack, and in San Diego, he and comrade MacLean cut a soon-to-be-released album with 82-year-old country blues legend Sam Chatmon.

Linden's new band, The Group du Jour, is his main interest these days. *Colin Linden Live* is to be released any day now by Ready Records. Linden calls the album "the zenith of my life so far. It was the most intense single experience I've ever had and it was all done within about an hour and 15 minutes."

Linden's ragtime-tinged rock is some of the most original and sincere music around. Much of his power comes from his dissatisfaction with the current rock scene. "Very few people write good songs anymore. There's little real guttural passion in rock'n'roll music, and that's the thing which made it so great—a lack of pretension. I think it's important to

play rock'n'roll aggressively, but you don't have to be arrogant."

Onstage, there is a great sense of humility, and a true joy and deep belief permeates even his most dramatic vocals. Also quite impressive is the band's energy. And Linden says he's lost 82 pounds since he began playing a lot of live rock. "The sustenance of energy for a long period of time is basically by concentrating on no more than the very note you're playing at the second you play it, and no more than the very work you're singing, singing it like it's the last one you're going to sing."

"I want to play music and break down people's inhibitions," continues Linden. "I want to open up people's eyes to feel positive about themselves. I wanna make people laugh and I wanna make them cry. And I'd like them to learn something. But I'd rather have them whip beer bottles at me than just sit there."

As for his band, I allowed Linden a one-sentence spontaneous description of each member: "David R. Hayes (bass) is Mr. Excitement... Fred MacMurray after eating raw meat. Bruce Moffet (drums) is the self-styled Sleep King, and elegant purveyor of the modern romantic in Toronto society. Bucky Berger is a happy-go-lucky home-owner who, when inspired, is a total maniac on the drums. Jodi "Leroi" Golick is undoubtedly the King of Golick, a gourmet chef who expounds his passion onto his saxophone nightly."

Currently, Charlie Chaplin is a great influence in Linden's life and approach to creative work. "He was a humanitarian, full of life and vitality. There was no pretension in



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his work. He put love into his work and gave things to people. He took incredible chances in his career. He's just like Howlin' Wolf."

But Colin Linden's greatest influence is his own lifestyle. He calls it "impoverished luxury" because "I live on a very small budget, and this place is paradise for me because I have everything I want here. This is my vision. And the music that I play deals with people who are trying to make their lives happy and run into good times and bad times and try to make the most out of what they have."

And to demonstrate this even more graphically, Linden gives me a tour of his College/Bathurst flat:

"We're above a Chinese restaurant and we're in the Monotone Penthouse. I live with two other musicians and it's a very inspiring place to live... That's the Monotone Terrace out there. And the room that's over from the bathroom is what's called the Blind Arthur Limbo Dance Studio. And then the Monotone Living Room and the Phone King's Palace on the other side."

"Being a Limbo is what our life is about here. We're Dr. Limbo, Dr. Limbo, and Dr. Limbo. It's all a matter of Limbosis..."

This Monday *The Edge* hosts a Record-Launching/Concert for *The Group du Jour*. And Colin would like to see you there.

U2: They've learned not to slobber



P. L. Noble

Elliott Lefko

"Not saviour from on High deliver No trust have we in prince or peer But in our strong arm to delivery."
—Brendan Behan, *Borstal Boy*

They're young, talented and Irish, and like their artistic brethren who've preceded them, once they get something in their sight they tend to work very hard to achieve it.

U2, four musicians who range in age from 19 to 21, are in the process of achieving their goals. Since releasing their first single in late 1979, they've played across Europe, are on their second North American tour in the last six months (they played the Maple Leaf Ballroom last Wednesday), and their debut album *Boy*, released five weeks ago, is already in its third week on the Toronto

Top 30 album charts.

"We're going to spend a lot of time over here," says Bono, 21, the band's lead singer and lyricist. "When it comes down to it, the sort of music we're talking about is progressive music—from the heart. Music that people can express themselves through."

U2's Toronto debut at the El Mocambo the night following John Lennon's death was very intense and aggressive, yet at the same time sensitive. Basically three pieces (with guitarist The Edge, and bass player Adam Clayton, both 20, and drummer Larry Mullin, 18) the youthful outfit creates a powerful, symphonic sound, full of emotion.

"Our ambition in a live situation has always been to move people

through all the emotions possible with musical images created by the way we're playing, and the intensity with which we're trying to get it across," points out the blonde, curly-haired Clayton.

When it's working, the potential is mind-boggling. According to Bono, "the audience will just boil and explode. We want to affect people the way a film like *Apocalypse Now* does. You go through the whole thing and come out feeling like you've been through something. That's what we're aiming at. It's not very often you can achieve that, but we're working towards that all the time."

The spirit of U2 is embodied in the album title—*Boy*—and its cover art, a photograph of a naked, innocent, frail young boy, shot from the waist up.

They can't release the original album cover because there have been accusations of pedophilia. People charged that they were exploiting the child's sexuality.

U2 don't laugh off the accusations. They suggest the motives for placing the boy on their album cover was in keeping with the group's concept.

"The child's name is Peter," explains Bono. "He lives across the street from me. He is not being exploited sexually. In fact he's the innocence which was the important part of the symbol."

The boy represents a birth, an introduction to U2. Just as the child looks quite vulnerable, so too does

the band, which is just starting out. And like the child, the group has a lot ahead of it.

"We're youth; adolescence has a lot to do with the album," offers Bono. "One of our songs, *Twilight*, expresses it. *Twilight* is an image I use for adolescence. It's in between the dark and day, when things can't be seen too clearly. The boy meets Man in the shadow, and out of that struggle comes questions. You hope that you'll find the answers."

With the second album the boys hope to become men. "We feel far



less fragile since the album's been released," says Clayton. "We've learned not to slobber, how to run, as well as walk. We're coming to grips with the instruments. We're making them sound the way we want them to sound."

While U2 conceptualized their direction early, they knew that in order for audiences to be aware of them, they had to attract some media attention. So in a novel approach they invite major critics from both Europe and North America to come to Ireland and spend some time with them.

"You can't expect a critic to see us once and be able to write everything about the band. We felt that only after a writer understood our personalities and the way we reacted and got on could they understand and accept the integrity of the band," Clayton says.

"Now we're prepared," he continues. "We're ready for people to throw things at us. I appreciate it could happen."

Besides perseverance, which they have in abundance, the group wouldn't mind a bit of traditional Irish luck to keep things on track. Bono cringes when he tells the story of a fellow Irishman he met while last in Toronto, who unfortunately was having some difficult times.

"He was walking on the street and a car went past and went over a bottle, and the bottle shot out from under the wheels, and almost broke his nose. He said that it could only happen to an Irishman."