

club

MTV

The Club MTV Tour rolled into Exhibition Stadium July 10 and pumped some heavy dance music into the air. The featured performers — Was (Not Was), Information Society, Milli Vanilli, Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam, and Tone Loc — provided enough variety for everybody to get something that would make them dance.

Was (Not Was) opened up the night with non-stop music and frenetic dance routines that would have worked up a sweat in the Arctic. Their songs melded into each other without a break, as if a DJ was spinning tunes in a club. This was just fine for the folks on the dance floor, however, more than half the audience was just standing still. I didn't quite understand this since the music was pumping, and the performance was high energy.

Especially notable were the horn and guitar players — very skilled musicians just a little left of normal, having fun and being original. Also notable was their Michael Jackson impersonation of "Man in the Mirror," which was well done and well received by the crowd. And of course, they had major fun with "Everybody Do the Dinosaur." Y'know, for older guys, they know how to party. "Boom boom, shaka-laka boom" to you too.

After getting off to a surprisingly decent start, Information Society came onstage. Halfway through the set I had to wonder

by ANDY MARSHALL

why, with all their music pre-recorded, did they bother coming onstage?

We could have stayed at home, listened to their album and watched their picture, and derived the same amount of pleasure. Even if they decided to imitate the music, the least they could do is get it right. There are few things more frustrating than hearing the sounds of guitars, keyboards, and percussion with no corresponding instruments onstage. Why call it a live show?

Also embarrassing was the obvious manner of imitation. The drummer was the most glaring example, sometimes forgetting to hit the kick drum when we heard a kick drum, or switching to do a previous percussion section while the kick and the snare and the hi-hat kept going. Even though their music was very danceable stuff, they lost a lot of the crowd's interest because of their performing deficiencies. Even the stage hands decided to play frisbee in the infield. So, is Information Society live or Memorex? Definitely Memorex!

Milli Vanilli's "live" performance of "Girl You Know It's True" brought the crowd back to life, even though the bass guitar was out of tune for half the song. But the crowd overlooked those little things and got wrapped up in their antics onstage. While they are a pale imitation of some American stars (Bobby Brown, Guy, MC Hammer) in their dancing and gestures, the crowd loved them because they just had fun onstage.

Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam proved to be the tightest group musically. No mistakes, hot music, with an electrifying jam at the end of "Head to Toe" in the style of Prince and the New Power Generation. Without the heat of her music however, Lisa Lisa would have died, 'cause she can't sing and she can't dance. She strutted her stuff most of the time, leaving the high energy stuff to her sideman in Cult Jam, who kept the crowd going with his dancing and rapport.

The entrance of Tone Loc was grand as he magically appeared in a huge whisky bottle with the words Funky Cold Medina written on it.

And he turned the place out. His two dancers electrified the crowd by doing what Milli Vanilli tried to do. His DJ gave a lesson in the art of scratching that was fast, precise, and mind-blowing. And he was just himself, with his raspy voice, big belly and "Funky Cold Medina."

Overall, his entourage had the best dancers and best performers. They teased to no end, keeping the energy up and the crowd on edge. When he finally asked for volunteers to come onstage to do the "Wild Thing," 17 girls jumped at the chance, and the crowd had some major fun. It seemed a little weird that on a bill which had elements of British dance music, house, pop and funk, that hip-hop is the sound which the crowd appreciated the most. But what a way to go.

AMERICA'S favourite Canadians

A few months ago, The Cowboy Junkies made a landmark appearance on *Saturday Night Live*. What did they play? "Sweet Jane," a song which is not only their best known work, but is also a remake of the original by New York's seminal songwriter, Lou Reed.

After the release of Blue Rodeo's first album, *Outskirts*, *Rolling Stone Magazine* said "the best new American band, may very well be Canadian."

Quite rapidly, it seems, a slew of Canadian bands are becoming successful south of the border. Concurrently, they are being compared to American groups and are using American music to get them there. Is this a coincidence? Hardly.

Despite what *Rolling Stone*

says, Blue Rodeo is a group with a very Canadian sensibility. Through the use of classic American musical styles, such as psychedellic rock and country, the group espouses a very Canadian point of view towards the States. It is, in fact, what the States need right now, a good shot in the arm.

Blue Rodeo's music is chock full of cynicism. One of their first hits could even be seen as an allegorical reference to the States and her tendency to see the world "through rose-coloured glasses." Looked at in this way, the song represents Canadians as a group that sees "a world that's tired and scared of living on the edge too long." This is a typically Canadian attitude, which goes back musically as far as The Guess Who's "American Woman," back in 1970 — and probably farther.

On their second album there are songs about such disparate topics as Oliver North ("God and Country") and Florida, each one a cutting slice of American life. On the former, singer Greg Keelor remarks on North's "circus sympathy and...postcard sincerity," while the latter describes Canada's favourite vacation spot as the "land of endless malls, images of Elvis flicks, convertibles and blondes."

Rather than finding their uniqueness in their point of view, The Cowboy Junkies, Canada's other premier country-rock fusion band, have created a style all their own. The Junkies are quite the opposite of Blue Rodeo, as they are distinctive for their sound rather than the attitude of their lyrics. While the latter has mastered a wide variety of styles, largely

through the talents of songwriters Greg Keelor and Jim Cuddy, The Cowboy Junkies relish their solitary style, a mellow sound reminiscent of Reed.

Unlike Blue Rodeo, a group proud of its own songwriting talents, The Cowboy Junkies' signature song is a cover version.

On their own major label debut, *The Trinity Session*, as well as their independent release *Whites Off Earth Now!!*, the Junkies give a large number of other people's songs their own distinctive treatment, from Bruce Springsteen's "State Trooper" to Patsy Cline's "Walking After Midnight."

While all of their covers are American blues and folk standards, each one gets its own treatment with Margo Timmins' haunting vocals, and The Junkies trademark downbeat sound.

Because of their nature, it was only right that the group make its American television debut on *Saturday Night Live*, and that they perform a song by Reed on the show. This combination, along with an endorsement by the trendsetting *L.A. Times* has made The Cowboy Junkies a hot property in the States, with album sales above 600,000 copies, and a secure place on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Have the Junkies sold out? Have Blue Rodeo? Hardly.

Blue Rodeo's success is largely due to the clever songwriting of Keelor and Cuddy, whereas The Cowboy Junkies are rooted in a unique performance style. While both bands have American traits, they also have that critical streak of originality that is needed to succeed in the States.

CHRY-FM 105.5 FM

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| 1 <i>the Lawn</i> (C) | Peace in the Valley | Secret |
| 2 <i>Ray Condo</i> (C) | Hot & Cold | Crazy |
| 3 <i>Glen Meadmore</i> (C) | Squawbread | Amoeba |
| 4 <i>Happy Flowers</i> | Oof | Homestead |
| 5 <i>28th Street Crew</i> | I Need A Rhythm | Vendetta 12" |

Compiled by Edward Skira & Lisa Roosen-Runge, Music Directors, from programmers' playlists over a 2-week period ending July 3rd, 1989. Programmers choose their own material. C denotes Canadian material. CHRY 105.5 FM, Request Line 736-5656.

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| 6 <i>My Bloody Valentine</i> | Feed Me With Your Kisses | Creation/Polygram |
| 7 <i>Loudon Wainwright III</i> | Therapy | Silverton/BMG |
| 8 <i>Desparate Minds</i> (C) | Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream | Chikara |
| 9 <i>Foxy Brown</i> | Sorry | Steelie & Cleve 7" |
| 10 <i>Mecca Normal</i> (C) | Mecca Normal | Smarten Up |