

Bigger than the Beatles

U2 IN MONTREAL

by Greg Jones

Many fans left U2's recent performance at Montreal's Olympic Stadium with an appreciation of a political message, international in scope and emotionally delivered to a capacity crowd of 66,000.

As the lights dimmer, guitarist The Edge began the intro to their third single, "Where the Streets Have No Name", off their multi-platinum album *The Joshua Tree*. This was the beginning of a memorable concert that would place U2 into the musical history of Montreal.

Although performing with a dislocated left shoulder, lead singer Bono Vox showed no signs of lacking intensity on stage. In fact, he said the band felt that this Montreal performance was the most satisfying of the tour, and confirmed the fact with a resounding six encores. One of the encores was a song that, perhaps more than any other, reveals the attributes which make U2 the band of the Eighties — "Sunday, Bloody Sunday".

With an unrepentant idealistic stance, U2's lyrics revealed

not a political preference but an attempt to aid the audience in understanding the painful events resulting from human error, such as the political and religious unrest in the band's Irish homeland.

Not unexpectedly, the band performed "I Will Follow", "New Year's Day", and "With or Without You" in succession, representing the progression of the styles in albums. These songs were accompanied by tracks off *Boy*, *War* and *The Joshua Tree*. Bono introduced a Bob Dylan song in which he would normally be playing the guitar. He couldn't because of his dislocated shoulder, so he scanned the audience and brought on stage a fan who played the notes necessary to make the song complete. The crowd roared in appreciation — no doubt feeling a part of themselves in that fan's representation.

Amnesty International was given free space for a fundraising booth through the request, if not demands, of U2. It was odd to see an organization profiting from the concert other than vendors and scalpers.

Beyond standard radio fare

BLUE RODEO

by Scott Neily

Blue Rodeo is a five-member band that has been making musical waves in Toronto since 1984, and with good reason.

Recently, they played their first Atlantic Canada date at the Middle Deck Lounge and I had a chance to talk to Greg Keelor at the press conference. Although the band's current line-up is only a few years old, the actual origins of Blue Rodeo can be traced back much further. Keelor and Jim Cuddy (both lead singers, songwriters, and guitarists) have been playing together, and in other bands, since 1977. When a trip to the limited club circuit of New York City proved to be a lesson in experience, they moved back to Toronto and met the rest of the current line-up. "When I was living in Toronto, the drummer, Cleave Anderson, was the first punk I ever saw," said Keelor. "He had the hair, the safety pins, y'know, hardcore." Bassist Basil Donovan, who had played with Anderson in The Sharks, was attracted through a classified ad. The band was completed with the addition of Winnipeg keyboardist Bobby Wiseman.

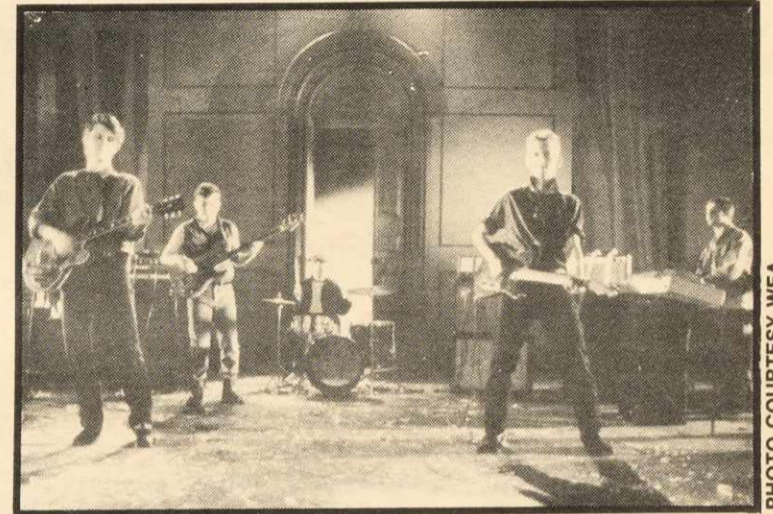
The diversity of musical styles on their debut album, *Outskirts*, can be traced to the various backgrounds of the band members. "We quit doing pop music and started writing things that were a little more part of what we listened to," explained Keelor. "There's a very strong contribution from each member of the band and the songs are written in a certain way. We've always encouraged people to play, and then to play a little bit further than that, too. Everyone's influences are involved, and that way, it makes for a bigger spectrum of things you can do. It all sorta fits in."

"There are no hidden messages"

Their music is lively, catchy, and interesting, but their lyrics go beyond standard radio fare. For example, the song "Outskirts" is directly about David Kennedy, but it also deals with how the Kennedys were a metaphor for the whole American

dream. "There are no hidden messages, but the songs are pretty conversational in nature," said Keelor. "Like, if you go and talk to somebody in a bar, you're gonna end up talking about sex,

thing because they think it's gonna get on the radio. I'm still a strong believer that good songs and good bands will get on the radio, and the songs don't have to be based on trying to please the



Blue Rodeo: L to R, Jim Cuddy, Basil Donovan, Cleave Anderson, Greg Keelor, Bobby Wiseman.

PHOTO COURTESY WEA

love, drinking, politics, whatever. There are songs on the record that're the same way. I have a personal fascination with people who burn out, especially when they seem to have everything going for them and they end up screwing up somewhere along the way. The covers of the *National Enquirer* are always the most interesting to me."

As a fairly new band, Blue Rodeo is being given a fair amount of promotion by WEA Canada. That promotion has paid off nicely, as they have had reasonably high rotation on MuchMusic. Although the album was considered alternative by some when it was first released, radio airplay has placed *Outskirts* into the category of 'legitimate mainstream'. But it was not aimed to be that way, Keelor explained. "We forget about that when we started this band. We thought, let's just write songs and take 'em as they come, and not get too hyped up about where we can fit in. That's the most important thing for us, to enjoy it. Of course, we wanted to make a record, but we always thought it would always be an independent, college sorta thing."

Major success only comes to a very few bands, and achievements often rest on the fickleness of the public. Keelor had a few of his own ideas on the matter of entertainment. "Play the music that is closest to your heart, because I know, when I see a performer, I don't want to see somebody who's playing some-

lowest common denominator. I think that if you come out with something original, people will want that, and the industry will go for it too."

"good songs and good bands will get on the radio"

Blue Rodeo is a band with a great deal of energy, one that packs a lot into a live performance. Part of the reason could be the position the band is in now. "We're sort of at a fun stage now, where it's like starting over again. We are at that stage where we're going into a lot of cities in Canada, but no-one knows us. The record and the video are helping us, but we've still gotta win over an audience in every city we go to."

The band's show is presented in a more or less standard bar method, but curiously, only a few songs are repeated from night to night. "We have a lot of original music," said Keelor. "There are ten songs on the record, but we have fifty. We're always writing. It's sorta like a hobby." For those who missed the band on their last playing, fear not! Blue Rodeo will be playing at the Crazy Horse in Dartmouth from Nov. 11 to 14.



Bono: good thing his voice wasn't dislocated.

PHOTO BY: CHRIS HAMILTON