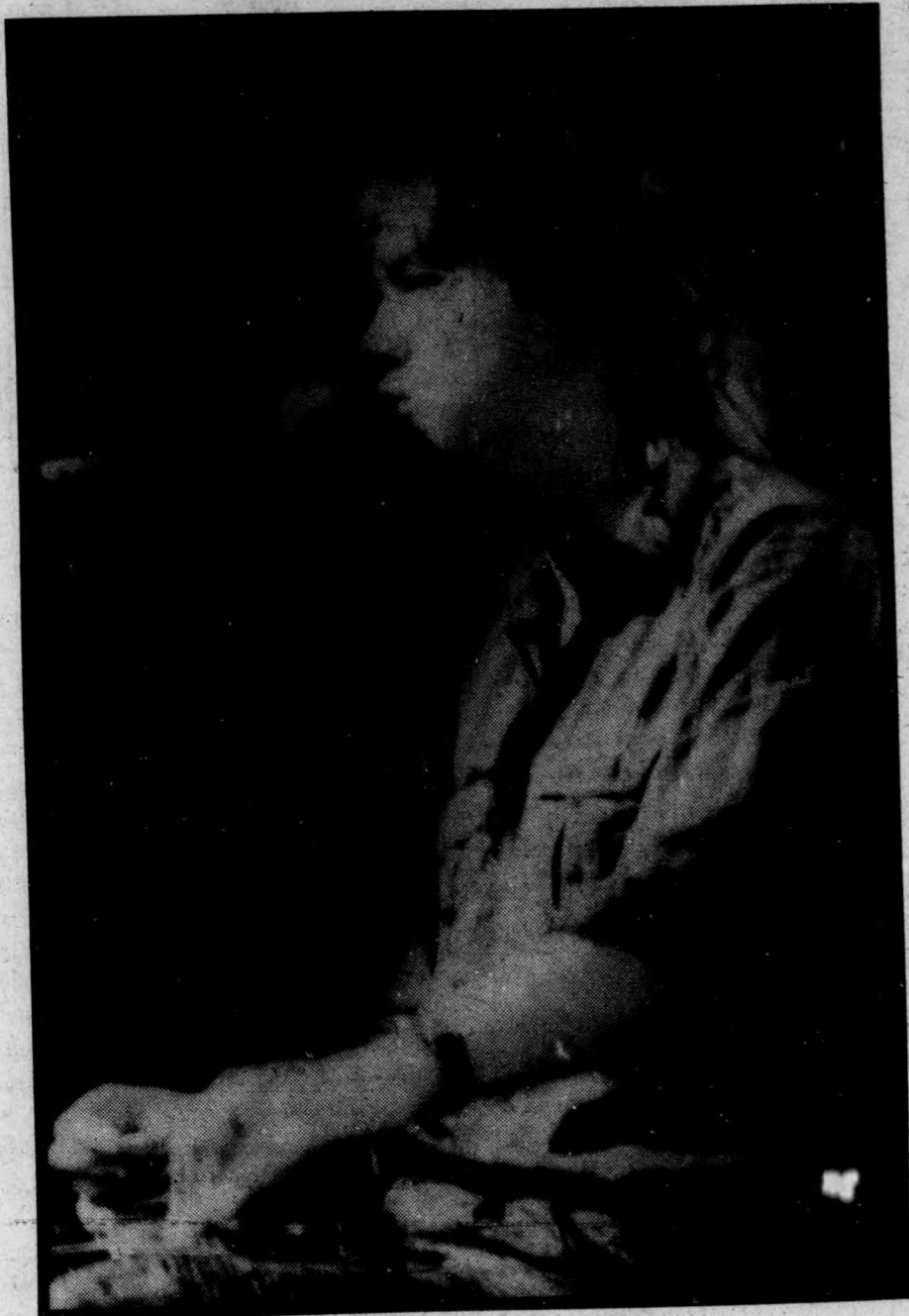


Healey blasts 'em down!



HEALEY - THE GREAT COMMUNICATOR

The Jeff Healey Band performed at the Chestnut Club last Monday night and it was, to say the least, a happening time. The band, hailing from Toronto, featured Jeff Healey (sightless) on guitar, Joe Rothman on bass, and Tom Steeves (a Saint John native) on drums. Using borrowed equipment (except for the guitars and a set of Sabian Cymbals) the band drew in an almost capacity crowd of over four hundred with rock, rhythm and blues.

The doors opened at eight o'clock to a line up that flowed down the stairs to the tavern but the band did not start playing until about twenty to ten. Finally, sitting with his guitar on his knees, the trio started in and by the fourth song (when the audience had finally caught its breath) was winding and riffing "Red Houses" by Hendrix. Healey usually leaves awe-struck people in his wake and this concert was no exception. People did not move,

they did not drink, they sat and stared at Healey's spotlighted hands. It was really incredible. His talent is so pervasive it fills everything; a three piece band blew everyone away.

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"Early in the Morning (Ain't got Nothin' but the Blues)" was played under red lights with an eerie, echoing blues whine. An original tune "Can't You See the Light" was well-received; for several reasons. Healey really cranked it on this one.

Standing up with what seemed like a precarious hold on his guitar, he calmly flipped it right around. This song, also a video release on Much Music, drove the crowd wild. It was evident that Healey enjoys per-

forming his own stuff equally well. His rumoured antics on the guitar began as he picked up the guitar (sometimes by the strings) and just riffed all over the place. His uncharacteristic hand/hold, his easy/amazing style and fact that he can flip a guitar and not miss a stroke impressed the audience outright. With this one, Healey established the band as not just capable of blues/rock covers.

Then came the Beatles' "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," which was given new meaning after the audience witnessed his physical use and hand/hold abuse of his guitar. No doubt in my mind, Healey could make a guitar weep if he wanted to.

A haze of music took over in which Healey undertook a version of "All Along the Watchtower," a song written by Dylan, made famous by Hendrix and redone with blatant Healey style. On this one Healey played sixteen or so bars with his teeth ... yes ... with his teeth. It was at this point I heard the comment behind me "None of this synthesizer bullshit, Healey is straight rock 'n' roll."

Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" received special attention too ... Healey continued

playing with the guitar behind his head without missing a stroke. Unorthodox is probably the best word to describe that one.

Another original "One Foot in the Gravel," followed. This tune I preferred over "Can't You See the Light" because it was much more musical. A long guitar intro and potent dark lyrics seemed to mesmerize all but the dancers. By this time about 10 or so people had squatted right on the dance floor about 3 or 4 feet from Healey's guitar. Healey, although blind, must have been able to feel the emotions he was illiciting; he stood up and revved everybody else up with "If You're Looking for Some Blues."

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Then, and I could feel it coming, the band started in on what I thought was a Yardbirds tune (you know, Clapton and the boys). It was not the Yardbirds, but Cream (you know, Clapton and boys with Ginger Baker on drums) doing "Badge." This, by the way,

was a completely spontaneous effort on Healey's part. He just started it up, waited for the other two to kick in and took it away.

"Adrianna," another original, the B side of the forty-five that was on sale at the door came next. Again, a solid attempt at their own music, but still reinforced with bluesy rock vocals and strong guitar. In true Hendrix style, ever a Canadian, Healey closed the evening with a beauty "Star Spangled Banner." Two encores followed: "Foxy Lady" (Hendrix) and "Doin' It Right."

Healey's one-night stand was a unique venue, almost to the point of being undecipherable. I was in awe, and I saw accomplished musicians in the audience in awe as well. Healey is blind, but you really wonder if it is a handicap. This was the second time I had seen Healey and although more professional, he is still very much unchanged. The band, with Healey left of centre, always sets up the same; the audience usually always ends up sitting on the dance floor in front of Healey and the music just rolls.

KAREN MAIR



JEFF LOADS UP TO UNLEASH THOSE HEAVENLY SALVOES