

# MEAT



## THE FORMULA

**A WEEKEND OF BANDS AT UNB? CAN IT BE TRUE? YES. UNCLE STEVIE CAMPS OUT AND GETS TO THE BOTTOM OF THINGS (CRIKEY!)**

Photo by Alastair Johnstone



Go on Sunshine... you can do it... Oh well never mind. 54-40 guy in a futile attempt to crack a smile

As an illustration of just how sad things had become, my trip to our watering hole last Friday represented the first such foray for over a year. Even back then it was merely an excuse for dear old Uncle Max and myself to unwind after the Friday Tea-Time show for a few sherberts and the opportunity to make some gopher holes in the felt of the pool table. Tonight however was a little different. For the first time that I can remember there was actually a good reason to make a pilgrimage to Matt's Fun-House other than tipping beer over the neighbors. Four bands in one evening? - Perish the thought!

The Vickers, from Moncton, are what you might term a plightly alternative covers band. Sure they crib from Stones, Doors, Yard Birds et al, but there is a certain amount of youthful exuberance that allows the mood to swing away from the totally artificial sound associated with most clone and tribute combos. This is mostly due to a lead vocalist that likes to use the stage and most of the floor in front of it as his playground; jumping, windmilling, shirt-clutching, strutting, all the moves you'd expect from any gregarious devotee of stadium tosh. This is just as well as the remaining members of the band merely examine their frets rather bashfully, only briefly coming to life for one of the few originals delivered that evening, namely the country n' western pisstake hoedown of Sex in the Hay. Tight and effective, the Vickers were a good choice to warm up a crowd of people who associate the bar-band experience to be a greatest hit bonanza anyway. Indeed the choice of a few Jagger/Richards compositions really did the trick. Suddenly a nucleus of Ale-heads erupted into an incessant chorus of "woo-wool" (from sympathy for the Devil) and indeed continued to do so for the next four hours.

A raucous set to be sure, our frontman showed us all just how good a mimic he is with startlingly good renditions of Morrison's Road House Blues and a Morrissey composition whose name momentarily escapes me sir. Despite his continually irritating pleas for the audience to move around a bit more, it wasn't until the end of the Vickers slot that people started to jump around. With this burgeoning enthusiasm becoming more and more evident, I was certainly curious to see how the great unwashed would respond to an acoustic duo, in this instance No Effects. As most of my entourage headed back to their tables as soon as a tired old Simon n' Garfunkle song dribbled through the speakers I feared the worse. No Effects of course remind me of Rusco and Steve, a pair of middle aged rascallions that played morning and night at a sea-side pub we used to frequent in Palngton called The Spinning Wheel. They were there for about five years playing laidback versions of tracks by Reed, Zeppelin, Hendrix and of course Simon and Garfunkle. That is until Steve managed to get the landlord's wife pregnant causing said owner to suffer from a lively heart attack that sent him off to that big draught-pump in the sky. In the Maritimes it is not just aging hippies that play such standards, but young gifted musicians as well that really should be influenced by the history of rock n' roll rather than copy it out directly. Steve and Billy are splendidly likeable lads with a laidback smile, a crack or two, and a flawlessly executed set of - surprise, surprise - covers. I needn't have worried about the crowd response since everybody apparently rushed to the front and were having a hell of a time singing along to their old favorites. Nirvana was in effect when the lads actually did play (horror of horrors) Sympathy For the Devil which needless to say sent the woo-woo squad into overdrive. The high point for me was when the

endearingly shy Brigitte Sullivan crept on stage and belted out The Flowers Don't Go and Shocked's Anchorage with such crystalline precision one had to wonder just why she was so nervous in the first place. With their individual talents, access to an excellent vocalist and a killer harmonica guy, I can only slap No Effects on the back of the legs for relying far too heavily on the easy path of generic sampling. But meanwhile the kids were going mental. So far the evening had been an unqualified success, aided quite substantially by a remarkably smooth transition from one band to the next. Next it was the turn of Kwame's nutty tribe of hipsters and idealogues Ujamaa. For an introduction by a crossover reggae band you probably won't see anything quite as effective as the way these kids open their set. First off a beautifully executed acapella snippet washes over the increasingly inebriate plebs like a warm breeze over the Serengetti (Knob-end? Mol?) In reality its a bit of a tease. You can see everyone on stage wound up like coils on benzedrine during the harmonizing, and you know that any minute now everything is going to go KA-POW! And it does. I've always thought Eddy Grant was a bit of a tosser, but the Ujles grab a hold of his Joanna (Johanna?) and jump up and down on it until no-one can help but blurt out a few "whoopie's!". Kwame, beaming like the proverbial Cheeshire feline, bounds around in his bubble of giggle-gas like a kaftan full of crazy-balls and pretty soon everybody else is doing much the same. "Groove Stevel" says Back Street's Tommy, and quite inexplicably I do. As if this wasn't enough there is suddenly a brief intermission where everybody in the band that is less than two feet away from something that goes "BANG!" when you hit it invariably does just that. It is here that all the hairs on the back of my neck, goose, step up to the old bald patch, as drums, bongoes, saucapans, hub-caps and coconuts are all given a

damn good thrashing. There are highlights peppered throughout an Ujamaa set - the delightfully complementary toasting between the Kwam-melster and the special Mike Doherty, the joyous little jig with the keyboard player, more percussive orgies - in fact you'll be hard pressed to suggest that any member of this band isn't giving well over their expected one hundred percent. What is most apparent though is that the crew are having such a wonderful time on stage and in all honesty they can't do a thing wrong.

It is rare for me to undergo an experience that completely winds me; crushes the air out of my lungs while filling me with so much excitement that I usually lose a night's sleep. Early Elvis, Early Stones, Zeppelin 1 and 2, Sex Pistols, Springsteen's Born to Run, The Jesus and Mary Chain, we all have vivid memories of the furious joy that erupts when you discover something that really yanks that crank. Quite unexpectedly it was at the Cow Shed (aka Capital Exhibit

Centre) last march that I was to experience another one of these epiphanies. Their name was Kearny Lake Road and they were simply quite astonishing. Like many kids today, the melodious crunch and grind of late-sixties roots is a profound influence for KLR, but here we have the definitive example of how to enjoy that tradition, be influenced by that tradition and yet produce a sound that is so original and progressive that the whole experience is as fresh as a newly-spawned mutant. And what a sound it was! Earlier in the evening a huddle that included the venerable Peter Rowan, whistle-stopping from Halifax, produced rumblings that the sound-men from Moncton might well be vile vile categorists, what with the word "hardcore" being bandied around like a profanity behind the mixing desk. Luckily our saviour took the shape of mega-prodigy Lloyd Hanson who allowed the mix to come through so effectively that it could have dried hair and cured acne. Hear this band on the scratchy little tape that CHSR currently has and you may wonder what all the fuss is about. But Please God let it be that the first

Photo by Alastair Johnstone



Remember their name my children for the day of reckoning is nigh. Young gods Kearny Lake Road Kick out the jams.