

# Oakley at work on new LP

By JOEY KILFOIL

With their first album on the verge of receiving gold-record status in Canada (50,000 units sold), the Halifax-based band Oakley is hard at work on its second album, which should be out in a few months.

The five-piece heavy rock band, known for both superb musicianship and powerful, dynamic vocals, is enormously popular in the Maritimes, Western Canada, and several other parts of the country. Last year, on a cross-Canada tour, their appearances in many locations were standing-room only.

Guitarist/songwriter Ritchie Oakley, 37, has played in a number of groups in his 23 years as a professional musician. He formed Oakley in 1977 with drummer Doug (Dawg) MacKay, bassist Bruce Dixon, and vocalist/songwriter Wayne Nicholson. Keyboardist John Lee joined shortly thereafter and the group recorded an album that could not be released because of contractual obligations.

Lee left the group in 1978, he now plays with Dutch Mason. Oakley continued as a four-piece until one week in Fredericton in 1979, when local keyboard whiz Bill MacAuley, who was then playing with Fredericton's own Redeye, was asked to play with them for the week's appearance in town. He joined the band after this appearance.

Oakley's first released album was recorded during

late 1979 and early 1980. Later that year, Dixon left and was replaced by Donny "Zipper" Morris. Oromocto's Dave Gallant, also an alumnus of Redeye, joined as second guitarist in early 1981.

Highly respected throughout the region for his versatile, sophisticated and emotional guitar playing, Gallant proved to be the perfect partner, and Oakley has nothing but praise for him, saying his time spent playing with Gallant was a learning experience. Unfortunately, economic hard times took their toll and Gallant had to be laid off in the spring of 1982. However, it is more than likely his playing will be featured on some of the new album's cuts.

Oakley says it is amazing the record did as well as it did, considering the various technical problems and legal actions which took place following its release. This culminated in a lawsuit by Nova Records, the company which released the album, against Pickwick International, a national distribution company that was later found to be involved in illegal business practices. After about a year of legal battling, the issue was finally settled when the band was allowed to take possession of several cartons of the albums that were sitting idle in warehouses. Despite this and other headaches, the album sold well and is expected to earn gold record status in a matter of months.

Although Nicholson's power-

ful, dramatic vocals have given the band a recognizable identity, Oakley has another major strength: the quality of its material. Some bands featuring hotshot players tend to write songs that are little more than shaky frameworks on which to hang solo after solo. Oakley's songs are thoughtful, intense, complex; they are full of different textures and often contain surprising twists.

"Rock and Roll Gypsies," for example, is a song about some of the difficulties faced when touring with a band. But rather than whining about it, the song exalts the players' pleasure with their chosen life: ". . . We're rock and roll gypsies/living it/loving it. . . ." "Guitar Man," whose protagonist is ". . . Living on whiskey and singing the blues," is a story not so much about a guitarist says Nicholson, as it is about an individual. The song was written about Maritime blues artist Dutchie Mason.

One of the songs on the first album which received a lot of attention is "I Almost Call Your Name." A ballad which begins with just an electric piano accompanying the dramatic vocal, the song describes the singer's inability to get over a former lover: ". . . Don't you know that I still love you/it's killing me to play this game/cause every time I get to loving her/I almost call your name. . ." It is to the band's credit that they can slip in a song this slow and lyrical and still hold the attention of even

the rowdiest of audiences. This cut features the album's only use of strings, played by members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

The band is planning to have more of a hand in the making of the new album, and will be directly involved in the production from beginning to end. Oakley says the band members are all creative individuals and he is confident they can produce good results. The album will feature a few live performances, to be recorded at a yet-undecided Halifax club.

There will be "eight or nine" studio cuts on the new LP, and a number of songs have already been recorded for possible inclusion. "She's Gone," left over from the recording of the first album, was released last spring as a single. It made the Top 10 in Fredericton and the Top 5 in Saint John, and did well all across the country. "Forbidden Fruit," written by Wayne Nicholson and Dave Gallant, may be released as a single. "Power Tripper" is an angry song performed straight from the heart, while "The Way I Am" is a ballad along the lines of "I Almost Call Your Name."

While Oakley says some songs that may be on the album aren't even written yet, others which have been completed include "Hey Look at Me Now," "Cat Walk," "Goodbye Cruel Love," "Practise What You Preach," and "Bet Your Love."

Just about all of these were written by Oakley and Nicholson, and represent a great deal of thought, both lyrically and musically.

"The pressure is on us to do a good job on this album," says Oakley. "If there is something wrong with it we have only ourselves to blame. But nobody ever said it would be easy."

The only real complaints about Oakley's first album was that the production was a bit muddy and the cover photo was poor. Oakley says if the second album sells well, the first may be remixed and rereleased with a new cover photo.

Onstage, the band avoids gimmicks and props and relies instead on human energy, although the stage performances do include a brilliant light show. The man in charge of this is Peter Hendrickson of Tour Tech. East, who serves as the group's road manager and lighting technician.

Jamie Hendrickson is the band's spotlight operator and guitar technician while Doug Barker engineers the live sound. Completing the crew is concessionaire Ron Barkhouse.

Oakley's personal views on his line of work serve as good advice to all aspiring musicians:

"In this business, you have to be tough, resilient, and look at things in the long term. It's always been my first love, and I can't see me doing anything else."

## Go on Green Light

By WILFRED LANGMAID  
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Though Bonnie Raitt has been very popular amongst her dedicated fans for some time, she has certainly not become a household word. One would like to think that this may change with the release of her new album *Green Light*.

Her talented band notwithstanding, Raitt herself is the heart and soul of this album. Throughout, her strong and true voice acts as the signature for the entire group, and she is a superb guitarist. There is some truly red-letter guitar work by Raitt in such raunchy rockers as "Willya Wontcha" and "Me and the Boys."

The lighthearted "Keep This Heart in Mind", on which Jackson Browne helps out on backing vocals, could well go

places commercially. Granted, the lyrics are anything but profound, but have you analyzed the words of the singles chart toppers recently? The good, tight sound which we find on this first cut is a trademark for the entire album.

Raitt displays herself as a most versatile artist on *Green Light*; she can also be most effective in a slower number like "River of Tears," and she certainly brings the funky "Can't Get Enough" well.

There is a hint of blues in "Keep This Heart in Mind," but the Bob Dylan-penned "Let's Keep It Between Us" is a pure bluesy delight. Raitt performs like a real pro both vocally and instrumentally, and a great deal is added to the song by the fine organ playing of William "Smitty" Smith.

Besides Smith, there are other sessional musicians who shine on *Green Light*, par-

ticularly David Woodford, whose saxophone playing is a major addition to both "Talk To Me" and "Keep This Heart in Mind."

There is an undertone of nostalgia in a lot of Raitt's music. Specifically, "Baby Come Back" sounds like a 1980's treatment of a song by a performer who still remembers the 1950's and 1960's.

*Green Light* is certainly not a masterpiece from cut to cut; for instance, the title track "Green Lights" is quite forgettable. Still, the LP is a good one overall.

The inevitable comparison to a full spectrum of other female artists, ranging from Linda Ronstadt to Pat Benetar, will likely continue for Bonnie Raitt. However, on *Green Light*, she proves that she is definitely a class act on her own.

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"She's crazy," I said. "That battle-axe won't do any good."

"You'd be surprised," said

Hairy, pointing to the opening drawbridge. I waved goodbye to Juliana, then dashed out onto the drawbridge with Hairy, followed in close pursuit by the monsters. Now we were out on the open lawn, in front of the castle, with more room to maneuver. Suddenly, I heard a whirring sound in the sky. I looked up, expecting to see a terror-dactyl, but saw a helicopter, instead. Frantically, I signalled to it. Sure enough, it drew closer and prepared to land. Its engines and propellers managed to scare off the monsters temporarily, so the two of us ran to the door of the 'copter. The copilot let us in, and I recognized him as Frank Xavier, as we got into the back. The copter took off right away, leaving Baron von Gut and his fiendish friends in disarray, and helplessly shaking their fists at us.

"I've got to hand it you, Frank," I told him. "You sure

arrived in the nick of time!"

"I'm good at that," he commented modestly. "By the way, who's your friend, Mr. Zuma?"

"Let him speak for himself!"

I answered. Soon we had explained the whole story, and I won't bore the reader with details. It seemed that Xavier had been called to Strasburg, because of a monster, which had turned out to be a fraud, designed by the baron to catch the world offguard. However, Xavier had sent me the telegram just in time to thwart von Gut's plans for secrecy. Because of this, he and Quasimoron must have planned my quick demise in his backyard jungle. But now the tables were turned, and all we had to do was inform the world of the baron's dastardly scheme. With this in mind, we flew to Cannes and got a film crew together. When we returned, I negotiated a film deal with the baron, arranged for a "Believe It Or Else!" show and bought the rights for a major novel. Then we called up Rooter's News!

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