



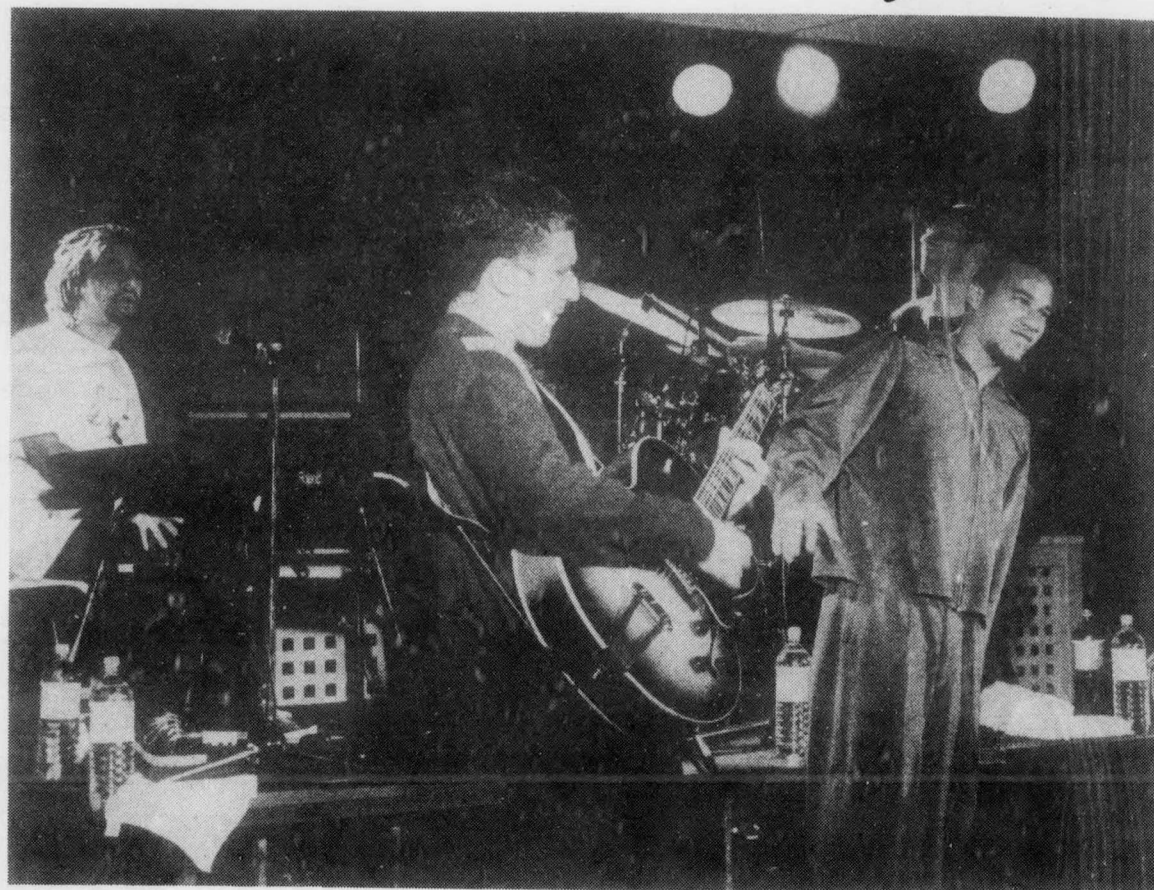
# ENTERTAINMENT

## 5th Annual Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival

### The Philosopher Kings



Gerald Eaton strikes a pose



The soul, the passion, the experience that is the Philosopher Kings.

Photos by Kent Rainville

by Jethelo E. Cabilete  
*Brunswickan Entertainment*

Just where was everyone on Wednesday night? Those of you who were not at the SUB Cafeteria missed an absolutely fabulous concert, courtesy of the Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival's third concert line-up The Philosopher Kings, with special guests Sunfish. It was certainly an evening full of brilliant entertainment with only one small problem. The venue. Whoever thought of the idea that a cafeteria would be an excellent place to hold a concert, didn't think things through carefully. A cafeteria is not exactly a great place for decent acoustics, much less atmosphere.

Hailing from Toronto, Ontario, The Philosopher Kings are a sextet comprised of classical and jazz trained musicians who perform a stunning array of mixed music. Blending the qualities of pop, jazz, R & B, funk, hip hop and soul, the resulting harmonies are reminiscent of "...the jazz culture of the 40's" with contemporary undertones that give it a fresh groove. The Kings' musical talents circle around the excellent rapport that the band members have with each other - a rapport that was quite evident during the concert. Jon Levine (principle

lyricist, piano), Jason Levine (bass), Craig Hunter (drums), Gerald Eaton (lead vocalist), Brain West and James McCollum (guitars) have certainly taken the audience of Fredericton by storm, with their fun-filled manner and energy.

The Philosopher Kings began their set with a bang, dazzling the fair-sized audience with a remarkable display of instrumental sets. The instrumental then segued into the bluesy *Leave That Man*, one of the tracks from their self-titled debut album. The rest of the evening was a swirl of various musical performances; from the dance-pop version of *Turn My Head Around* to the sultry and sensual *Charms*. Throughout the concert, the Kings never lost their high energy playing and the songs performed were unique versions of the originals. Lead vocalist Gerald Eaton's voice pushes the limits of smooth, powerful sound, while the instrumental/vocal backing of Levine, West, Levine, McCollum and Hunter provided a high-spirited, hard-driving edge to all of the songs. On top of the quality of the performance, the band also had excellent stage presence, establishing a strong connection with the members of the audience. In fact, most of the audience stood up and danced for many of the songs. And no wonder. There is an infectious quality

to the Philosopher Kings' music. As an encore performance, the Kings played the soft and soulful track *No Woman Around*. I expect that we will be seeing more of this band in the years to come.

At the start of the concert evening, the Cape Breton band, Sunfish, opened to a then small-sized audience. However this did not faze them one bit. Playing songs from their debut album, *Mola Mola*, this band certainly gave their all when it came to playing well. There is an edge to many of their songs, songs that contain lyrics about everyday life. Songs such as *Diamonds to Dust*, *Nathalie* and *Stoke the Fire* were upbeat and reflective. Yet the music is performed with a passion and honesty that is difficult to resist, and lends itself well to a folksy style. Lead vocalist and guitarist, Tommy Fidge, presents a rawness and vulnerability that is down to earth. Backed by an excellent instrumental section with drummer Mike Morrison and bassist Scott Brown, the trio made quite an impact on the steadily growing audience; especially when they exchanged snappy banter with some of the audience members. In one sense, they can be compared to such bands as The Tragically Hip and The Waltons. We may well see this noteworthy trio on its way to the top in the future.

### Cool trio open festival

by Apricot  
*Brunswickan Entertainment*

The 5th Annual Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival was kick started by the Francois Bourassa Trio. The trio, who have been playing together for 13 years, played a dynamic combination of traditional jazz and blues in the auditorium of Centre Communautaire on Tuesday night.

They opened with an atmospheric piece entitled "10 Octobre", explaining to titters in the audience that it was his mother's birthday (which was in reference to the date of the Quebec referendum). This piece featured a strong drum solo (distinguished in that the drummer was a substitute for their usual drummer) with the piano and double bass flowing in a 'stream of consciousness' in an unusual, almost ambient style.

Francois Bourassa played an impressive jazz piano solo piece called "Love" which displayed his interpretative abilities, but the real genius of the trio emerged as the double bass player, who played long

improvisational solos in pieces like "Fast Jazz" and "Ballad" to an appreciative audience. The pieces were occasionally discordant but always flowing into a unified harmonic whole.

The auditorium was noticeably emptier after the intermission (which was as long as the sets) and they missed an excellent second set which included a piece based on Cuban/Latin influences with a quick staccato on the drums and cymbals. The double bass played a strong melody while Bourassa plucked the piano strings on the open grand piano. Maybe the audience missed the smoky, alcoholic haze which is to jazz and blues what MSG is to Chinese food. Maybe they didn't appreciate the almost clinical atmosphere of a half filled red plush auditorium. You have to miss filling your lungs with second hand smoke (maybe even first hand) and drinking beer (does anyone actually drink bourbon?) while partaking of the jazz 'scene'. The music in a different venue would have made me want to grow a goatee and prolifically use the word 'cat'. But it was cool, man.