

# Detroit Freaks Out With First Participatory Zoo Dance

Gary Grimshaw

1966

The psychedelic dance concert, long an institution among San Francisco hippies, came to Detroit Friday and Saturday nights. Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, at the Grande Ballroom, Grand River one block south of Joy Road. Judging from the enthusiasm of the crowd who made it, the venture was a success. It looks like this new form of entertainment is here to stay.

Russ Gibb, the man responsible for bringing this example of West Coast culture to Detroit, is a modish looking man in his thirties who also teaches and does a spoken-word radio program. Russ, otherwise known as the Uncle Russ Travel Agency, hopes to expand the concerts and bring in big-name rock and folk-rock groups if enough interest is generated among Detroit's turned on people to support such a move.

As it stands some of the best talent in the Detroit area have gotten together to bring the dance off. The Chosen Few, a Rolling Stones oriented group from Ann Arbor, traded sets with the MC-5, perhaps the tightest rock group to come out of Detroit

The Chosen Few leaned heavily on top forty material, which is almost a necessity for a young group trying to make a name for themselves among teenyboppers. Their lack of original material was compensated for by their tight, driving sound and their well executed, if Rolling Stoneish, stage presence.

The real orgasmic moments of the two performances were created by the MC-5, a group from the Wayne campus area. They did a great deal of their own material, things ranging from the bluesy "Look What Yoy Done Done" to the eerie avant rock "Black to Com" to the Indian sound of "Raga Gunja". The MC-5 got everyone wrapped up in what they were doing. They will be appearing at the Grande indefinitely.

What makes the Grande Ballroom Dance Concerts different from the ordinary dance or concert is the total effect on the senses created by the blending of the light show and the music. A variety of unusual lighting effects synchronized with the penetrating rock sound are calculated to bring about a psychedelic experience in the minds of the participants, but like hypnosis, it required cooperation.

On opening night people entered the Spanish Provincial Grande a little awe-struck by the strange conditions, unsure of exactly what was happening. The total impression created is unlike anything that exists except an acid trip.

The light show was put together by the High Society, a group of artists, poets, writers, and film makers from Detroit. The show consists of throbbing ameba — like wall projections that create the feeling of being inside of something alive. Black ultraviolet lights, colored flashing house lights, and film clips from horror movies all combine to break down one's symbolizing capacity and expand awareness. A strobe light will be installed soon.

These dance concerts are geared to turned on people, not kids. The music presented is of the new variety of rock that has developed during the last two years, a form of music that has yet to be accurately named, yet has a tremendous following among young adults.

Perhaps the Grande Ballroom is a vanguard of things to come in Detroit, a turn away from the middle class mentality towards a more urban, universalized attitude. The psychedelic dance concert is a total experience, not just a dance. It is a preview of what will come when people lay down their up-tightened, symbol— oriented concepts and open up the Love Freak.

On Friday and Saturday nights, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, the Uncle Russ Travel agency and the High Society will do it all again. Featured bands will be the MC-5 and the Woolies. These dance concerts at the Grande will continue every weekend and will grow in quality as they grow in popularity. Look for a mind-blowing concert Halloween weekend.

# fifth Estate

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