

Rock and Roll Dope

John Sinclair

I want to take up where I left off last time and get into some of the alternatives to the present scene in the local rock and roll industry. There has been some fantastic response to my last column—even Russ Gibb gave me a call on a Saturday afternoon, and I hadn't heard from him for some time—and I want to detail some of the things that are starting to happen.

I just returned from Oakland with this news: Total attendance, even with the day-long rain, was over 7,000 people at \$3.50 a head. Russ Gibb, after negotiating with the university authorities, got \$1200 for the Detroit bands (MC5, SRC, Rationals, Stooges, Children, Dharma, Jagged Edge, Thyme at \$150 each) \$350 for the Chrysalis' one set, and \$3000 for Procol Harum. The university took in then, around \$25,000, of which \$15–20,000 is pure profit.

To Russ' credit, he was offered \$500 for his part in staging the affair for the university but turned it over to the Student Loan Fund. I'd rather see him get the money than the fucking university anyway.. What did it do for any of us except try to get me and the band arrested on our way into the playing area last night? That's the last chance they'll get from us.

Russ did call after reading my last column and say that he intends to try booking Detroit bands for two-night Grande scenes "to see if it'll work." Jeep Holland explained to me that he's been trying to do that for some time but has been squelched by Gibb. Russ' position, as he explained it to me last week over the radio (he switched us on the air in the middle of our conversation), is that under his present policy a lot more local bands get a chance to be heard than they would under the policy I've suggested, and, that the kids get a bigger selection of music.

They also share the wealth—but at 50 and 60 and 70 and 80 dollars a shot it doesn't make that much difference. And there isn't any real upgrading going on, either; the UP have been playing the Ballroom for a year now and still get \$80 and the chance to do the first set of the night. They haven't had a chance to play two sets on a Saturday night for months and months, and they deserve that chance. So do a lot of other bands who are still stuck on the one-set, bare-scale level.

I don't know if anyone out there cares about this shit, but it seems to me that people might like to know where their bread goes when they go to a dance or a concert or buy a record or whatever. In the Oakland deal, I don't see why the fuck the money that we bring in should go to Oakland University, of all places and we don't even make expenses. Again, all the weird shit happens behind the scenes, and people make it out there thinking that everyone's having a great time just like they are.

For the bands, it's really a drag to work under such conditions, and people should know that we're doing it for them rather than for the money—we're not getting any of the money anyway. There's been talk of a possible bonus for the bands, but that's not the point—the point is that we should be treated with some respect, since we're the ones who make deals like this possible in the first place.

On the good news front, it looks like WABX is starting to move forward toward a better scene all around. The free concert in Rouge Park two weeks ago was an encouraging affair, although it suffered from clumsy programming and the usual police-state stupidity by Detroit's finest. The afternoon concert headlined by the MC5 and the Rationals, neither band got to play more than 15 minutes due to long sets by the other groups and a strict 6 o'clock curfew.

The 5 was in the middle of their third tune when the police sent down orders to stop the show because of the curfew they'd set. Other than that everything was groovy, and maybe we'll have more get-togethers of that nature in the future. The Detroit "Free Press" typically miscovered the event, crediting the Parks and Recreation Dept. of the city of Detroit with the "love-in" and making no mention of the WABX jocks and management who had worked so hard to stage the concert—and did it all for free too. The people who were there are hip to it, though, and it was good.

WABX has also been doing some live remote broadcasts of Detroit bands, which is really exciting. John Detz and Jerry O'Neal broadcast 20 minutes of the MC5 from the Westside Pumpkin club two Fridays ago and plan to do more of this in the future. The WABX men are also investigating the possibilities of opening up a club in Detroit that would feature Detroit-Ann Arbor bands, pay them adequately, and work toward establishing Detroit as a major center of rock and roll music, which it is already. Terry Knight told me that they'd read my suggestions in the last issue of the Fifth Estate and wanted to do something along those lines. I told him they would have the cooperation of all of us, and I'll keep you posted on any further developments.

One of the most progressive clubs in the country, "Mother's" in Romeo, Michigan, was closed by a police creep scene last month, before I could tell you about their operation. Mother's was opened by a group of six young freaks from Romeo who called themselves "United Peach." The group narrowed itself down to three members—Luke Engel, Doug Card, and Steve Lindsay and was sailing along successfully until Romeo and Michigan State Police stopped a performance by Iggy Osterberg and the Psychedelic Stooges, arrested Iggy for indecent exposure, and closed the club.

Iggy's pants seem to have disintegrated and he was leaving the stage when Mother's competitor (another Romeo dance promoter) rushed down to the local State Police post and got the pigs on the scene. Hopefully United Peach will be able to get something else going, because they were really taking care of business. I know we haven't played in a more pleasant club ever—absolutely no hassles, just respect from the management, good vibes from the audience, cash money in payment, and a groovy scene all around.

The concerts at the First Unitarian Church this weekend are another indication that a change for the better is underway. Jerry Campbell, head of the church's Social Singles Club, approached me with his idea for a three-day rock festival at the church. I told him I'd help with the booking and could line up bands who would do it on a cooperative basis, since he had no front money to work with. He found a printer who did the posters for no bread in front, Ralph Pickett of the First Underground Cinema came in with films on a share-the-wealth plan, and everything looks really groovy.

The lineup will be: Stooges, UP, Billy C. and his Killer Blues Band (Friday night); MC5, Stooges, Popcorn Blizzard (Saturday); MC5, Weird Dude Employment Agency (featuring Charles Moore and Ron English for old Detroit Contemporary 4 fans), and the Wilson Mower Pursuit (Sunday). The film program will start at 8pm each night, music at 9. Tickets are at \$2.50 per night, 6.00 for all three, and the money is split among the bands, the films, poster printer, light show, and the church (after expenses only).

The music will be coming to you from the most precise stage possible—the church altar. Poet is Priest! Ginsberg said, and it's true.

We saw Allen Ginsberg last weekend in Chicago, when he followed the MC5 at the Sunday afternoon "music festival" in Chicago's Lincoln Park. The Fearless 5 was the only group in the whole fucking country to show up to play for their brothers and sisters in the Youth International Party—even the Fugs were cowering in their LA hotel rooms (with the notable exception of Ed Sanders and Tuli the K, who were in Chicago in full force—the rest of the band showed up Tuesday night for LBJ's birthday party), and Country Joe had booked a gig in Baltimore for the night. Joe was in Chicago on Friday and got beat up in his hotel's elevator when some drunken delegates from South Carolina charged in the elevator just as the doors had started to close and piled on Joe and a companion on their way up to their room. Joe suffered a possible broken nose and got the fuck out of town.

There were more police in Chicago than there are even in Detroit, which is as close to a naked police state as anywhere I've seen except Chicago last week. The pigs were everywhere, and they didn't want no longhairs hanging around. The music festival scheduled for Lincoln Park was denied a permit. Only at 3 am Sunday morning was permission granted for amplified music in the park—only up to 7 p.m. The city wouldn't allow any sound trucks, flatbed trucks (for stages), nor would it furnish electricity for the event. We waited around two hours for electricity,

played an hour or so, and packed up and headed back to Ann Arbor. But the MC5 did kick out the jams as promised, and we're glad we did.

In other developments, we hope to have some good news for you record-buying fans out there soon. I was in New York for three days a couple weeks ago talking to record companies about recording the MC5 and stirred up some interest. We'll be traveling to Los Angeles the 13th and 14th for two days at the Kaleidoscope and have been promised auditions by a number of major labels, so hopefully we'll be coming back with some good news for you. We plan to stay on the coast two weeks and hope to find work in San Francisco while we're there, and we'll be back to play the Grande the 27th and 28th, so I'll see you there.

fifth Estate

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