

Rock and Roll Dope

John Sinclair

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It's really good to see that Brother Ear is hearing the Detroit bands and digging them, especially since people around here have to be told how heavy the bands are. The Frost and the Thyme aren't the only together groups working in this area, either—there are a number of bands whose music is consistently interesting and moving, and these bands are improving every day.

Last weekend I heard the Popcorn Blizzard (a new band from up north, around Saginaw, led by Pete Woodman, who used to play drums with the Frost's Dick Wagner in a band called the Bossmen a couple years ago), the Third Power, and the Wilson Mower Pursuit, and they were all out of sight.

The week before I heard the Jagged Edge and the Rationals out at Oakland, and they were as together as any bands I've heard come into Detroit off the road. The Rationals, and particularly lead singer-saxophonist-flutist Scott Morgan, are getting stronger and farther out away from their early image, and it's good to see and hear. The Edge are unique and unified and have been doing their thing for a long time now.

Maybe it's good that Detroit hasn't been "discovered" by the record companies yet—it has to be good because that's what's happened—since the lack of attention has permitted the bands to develop slowly and organically. In many cases bands are recorded before they've really gotten their thing together, and they find it hard to change and develop because of their position in the commercial market with the companies urging them to keep turning out the same old beef stew because it guarantees sales. When the record industry people start looking around the Detroit scene, and they're starting to look now, they'll find a really healthy group of rock and roll bands ready and waiting for them.

I hear the MC5, the Stooges and the Up all the time and talk about them here enough, so I won't go into that now. But I heard another band the other night in Ann Arbor—the Charging Rhinoceros of Soul—that should be mentioned also as a fully-developed musical unit, into its own thing and doing all right with it.

The Rhino uses two trumpets, two saxophones, organ, guitar, bass, and drums, and their bag goes from straight blues to 1930-ish Basie swing to Miles Davis "Sketches of Spain" material to good-rockin' rhythm and blues, and they can really do it. They're a neighborhood band in Ann Arbor mostly, they play a lot of groovy gigs around town, and they're gettin' it together. Another interesting blues band is John Angelos' new group, Back and Back. Angelos' frantic vocals and Larry Carsman's sharp blues guitar work makes their band a real treat to hear.

There are more good Detroit bands, too, and I'll try to tell you about them when I hear them. I'm sure Brother Ear will too, and maybe the cat who wrote in last issue about all the bands better than the MC5 will send us a few reports. I'm sure the Fifth Estate will print anything like that, if you all send it in.

I've had some lengthy raps with some of the cats at WABX radio and they're really ready. The "underground radio" scene in town has been taking a long time to develop, and some really tired shit was foisted off as "underground sounds" for some months, but now it appears that there are people on the radio who are ready to really get into it and start kicking out the jams all the time.

As an indication of some of the changes that are going down, WABX players Jerry Lubin and Dan Karlisle renounced their phony radio names on the air a couple weeks ago—Jerry O'Neil and Terry King were on AM radio

creations, ghosts of “personality radio,” and the move to get rid of this bullshit by the two men marks a symbolic victory at least.

The staff at ABX has also moved, and been thoroughly supported by new station manager John Detz, to program their own shows completely, the only real taboos being the awful words “shit” and “fuck,” which mustn’t be uttered on the air. Although I did hear a couple verses of Ed Sanders’ “River of Shit,” from the new Fugs album, on Dick Crockett’s show the other day before it was quickly faded out. Somebody must have slipped something over on you, eh Dick?

As anybody knows, these moves are only the beginning, and hopefully, they’ll lead to some extremely interesting developments. Jerry Lubin, Dan Karlisle, and Dave Dixon are getting together off the air now too, which is another good sign, and they’re really concerned with getting things together at the station and around the scene too.

There’s talk of other ventures, with a coalition to be established made up of the radio people, young rock and roll magnates, hip merchants, and other media people who want to see Detroit move into the international eye as a music and communications center, and again there’ll be news of these developments, as it happens.

For one thing, the ABX people are interested in making the radio more available to the people of the community, and those who are involved in community ventures and services of any kind are invited to call Jerry, Dan or Dave and hip them to it so they can tell people about it. That’s something that really hasn’t existed before, and since communications in Detroit are so tenuous anyway, it’s a real advance. Call them up and tell them what’s going down. They’re also interested in getting tapes of neighborhood bands to play on the air, so if your band has some music on tape that’s good enough for people to listen to, you might get in touch with those cats and let them hear it.

They’ve got a live MC5 tape now and will play it for you if you ask—also the excellent Teagarden and VanWinkle album tape and some nice things by the Red White and Blues Band. They were playing the SRC album tape before the record was released, too, and that was good to hear. But they can’t go any farther out than you let them, so give it up and let them know what you wanna do, so they can do it with you.

The Unitarian Church scene last weekend, as everyone who was there knows, was a very groovy scene all weekend, Sunday night especially. The Oracle Ramus, one of the illustrious founders of the dynamic ZENTA movement, delivered a high-energy sermon and consecrated the sacrament on the altar in the middle of the MC5’s set. The 5 and our whole household have converted to ZENTA, as have other families in the Ann Arbor area. Look for the release of the ZENTA PAPERS late next month, to be issued at the Halloween ZENTA revival meeting, time and place to be announced.

And now for the MC5 news roundup, for all of you out there who are interested in what’s happening with the band. I guess those of you who are tired of it can stop now and go back and read this other shit over, but stop here when you get done, ok? The trip to California announced so proudly last issue was called off since the Kaleidoscope folded a week before we were supposed to leave. Then a hastily-scheduled gig in St. Joseph, Michigan for the same weekend was just as hastily called off at the last minute because the local paper, the Benton Harbor something-or-other, evidently printed a number of slanderous stories about the MC5 and scared the club owner off. We’re looking into it now to see if we can sue the creeps.

We played a benefit for the arrested demonstrators and welfare mothers in Ann Arbor last Monday, along with Buddy Guy’s Blues Band and the Charging Rhino. The Stooges were there all ready to play too, but Buddy went on so long that he wiped their time spot right out. The 5 had to get special permission from the authorities in order to do their show after Buddy Guy finally left the stage. It was a righteous dance and made the bustees some bread.

The booking at the Grande for the 5, also announced last time, was a false alarm. Evidently, Russ Gibb isn’t ready to start trying the 2-night gigs for Detroit bands until Thanksgiving time, when he’s scheduled the MC5 and the Thyme for Wednesday and Thursday night for a percentage. It’ll be the same old beef stew until then I’m afraid. The MC5 will be going in to the Grande on a Saturday, next weekend, September 21st, with the Amboy Dukes and the UP, a thrilling night of rock and roll music. The weekend after that, on Sept. 27th, Friday, we’ll be at the Crow’s Nest East in St. Clair Shores for all you East Side freeks.

fifth Estate

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