

Ear Ye!

Two Parts Cream, One Part Traffic, One Part Family =

Bob Stark

1969

The thought of hearing any music played in Olympia Stadium is distressing. There is no acoustical ceiling on the arena and the bare rafters not only echo much of the sound, but also distort it or often trap it. Also, setting up the stage at one end of the narrow stadium makes it difficult, if not impossible to clearly see what's going on.

But Blind Faith, appearing there August 1, ignored these obstacles to play a set that added significantly to their reputation as the world's foremost "supergroup."

From what I can gather, Uncle Russ had to go through considerable hassle to add the Frost to the tour package that Blind Faith brought with them. It really wasn't worth it because their addition meant there were four groups on the bill. They had to play first, starting at 8:00 but most of the crowd didn't start arriving until 8:30 or later.

They played to a half empty house (which did nothing to improve on the echoes), most of which was involved in finding seats or looking for friends. Four groups just made the concert last too long.

Taste, the second group on the bill, deserved better also. They played well enough and a lot of people listened, but the sit-down audience was just too impersonal. Playing third billing on a tour of sit-down concerts is not the best way for an unknown group to earn a reputation because, unless a group has the charisma to grab the audience's attention before they get on stage, no matter how well they play, most of the people just won't listen. Doing this tour will probably make their name known to a lot of people, but it won't do anything for their musical reputation.

Delaney and Bonnie and Friends had the audience, but the echoes kept Bonnie's vocals hovering somewhere around the top row of the balcony. It was really shameful.

The band laid down a tight soul (Memphis style) backing for the singers, but most of the effect was lost somewhere in the rafters. Despite the sound most of their songs were exciting in a way that similarly instrumental bands like Blood, Sweat and Tears, with all their pretentiousness, can't come near. I hope Russ books them again soon because I'd really like to see them at the ballroom.

But these groups were only preliminaries to the big show (and just how big it was is witnessed by the fact that when someone accidentally dimmed the house lights while Blind Faith's equipment was being set up, the crowd erupted in spontaneous cheers). Blind Faith had arrived.

Eric had a newly-grown beard and was looking kind of freaked out. Both he and Steve had had their hair cut. Ginger looked just as he always has. Rick was wearing bright pink pants. The crowd loved them before they played a note. And they didn't let their people down.

Eric, Ginger, and Rick played together as a solid unit while Steve (Stevie?) still had a tendency to wander away from them, especially with his organ playing, but the group was much fuller and more together than Cream or Traffic ever got to be.

The songs were far more structured than what Cream did on stage (especially "Can't Find My Way Home"); the solos were shorter and more pointed. Even in "Do What You Want," where each of them took a solo there was a strong continuity.

If Ginger Baker had been God, he couldn't have got a more enthusiastic audience. They cheered his solo as soon as it became apparent he was going to start it. He didn't let them down. Three times he brought every-one to their feet with displays of speed few others could even try to match. It wasn't great music, but it was one hell of a drum solo.

Maybe Ginger Baker IS God!

They ended their set, but didn't even bother to unplug because they knew what the audience wanted. They waited for Delaney and Bonnie and all their friends to come back on the stage, and then they encored with "Sunshine of Your Love," played with a feeling of erotic joy that Cream, with all their power, couldn't even come near.

Blind Faith is not a new Cream nor a new Traffic. It's a group with the potential to be one of the greatest ever. To be far better than the sum of its parts.

Due to some unforeseen complications (a baseball game) the second WABX free concert has been postponed from August 3 until August 10 and moved from the baseball diamond at Palmer Park to Tartar Field, the scene of the first free concert. Featured on August 10 will be the Amboy Dukes, the Gold Brothers, and other top local bands.

COMING SEPTEMBER 6! THIS IS THE BIG ONE! APPEARING IN CONCERT, ONE NIGHT ONLY, AT COBO HALL—LITTLE RICHARD AND JERRY LEE LEWIS.

Dave Mason (ex-Traffic) plays on some of the tracks of the upcoming Delaney & Bonnie LP while ex-Traffic drummer, Jim Capaldi, has joined Spooky Tooth.

Nicky Hopkins (ex-Jeff Beck, and everybody's records) may appear with the Rolling Stones in England, Meantime, ex-Beck singer, Rod Stewart, (who has completed a solo LP) may join the Small Faces along with ex-Beck bassist Ron Wood. Beck, left with only drummer Tony Newman, may join Donovan for an American tour.

Pacific Gas & Electric, featuring the superb guitar playing of Glenn Schwartz (who used to play with the James Gang) will have their second LP released soon by Columbia. The album will be called "Pacific Gas & Electric" and will feature all original material including a four-part instrumental suite. Watch for it.

fifth Estate

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