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September, 1981



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CLASSIC ROCK



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ChicagoFest '81



Photos by Rich Larkin

ChicagoFest '81



"... well-known crazy Rick Nielsen chopped and riffed like never before."

By Ken Keenan
Photos by Wils Kluge

ChicagoFest 1981 provided an opportunity for willing participants to indulge themselves in a delicious buffet of rock and roll cuisine.

The Chicago Tribune/Loop "Rock Around The Dock" featured four or more bands daily; while the WLS "Rock On The Roof" allowed nostalgic rockers a look into the past with such acts as Jan & Jean and The Association.

Performing on the main stage were Cheap Trick with Cold Chisel, August 5, and .38 Special with the Atlanta Rhythm Section and The Dregs, August 7.

The well-publicized opening night Rock Dock bill featured Capitol recording artist Billy Squier in the headline slot. Talk about perfect timing! Squier and his band are a hot item these days; what with their new *Don't Say No* lp climbing the charts and receiving solid airplay—especially in the Chicago area.

Their brand of rockin' pop/metal was just the right recipe for the packed crowd (no one was allowed in the area after 7:30). They played the hit songs, *The Stroke*, *Lonely Is The Night*, and *In The Dark*—as the enthusiasm bounced back and forth between band and audience.

Silver Condor (Squier's opening act) played a tight, very professional set. This newly formed mini-super group has a debut album out and a hit single, *For The Sake Of Survival*.

The second night of 'Fest action featured a basic menu of Chicago rock artists; topped off by Survivor and The B'zz.

Jim Peterik led his Survivor boys through an energetic romp of original material from their two Scotti Brothers albums.

Day Three and the first Friday of ChicagoFest brought us the Go-Go's (an all female wave/punk band from Los Angeles), and the much talked-about, 20/200, also from L.A.

Another Chicago favorite headlined the fourth night as Off Broadway put on a dandy show.

Singer Cliff Johnson and company showed no sign of woe (they've recently been dropped by Atlantic Records) as they rocked out numbers from *On and Quick Turns*. Unfortunately, hard rain prohibited Canada's beat-rock quartet, The Kings, from playing on Sunday; but they were re-scheduled for the following Wednesday.

Monday, August 3, was a great day for 'Fest Rock Dock visitors; as six bands combined to create a smorgasbord of talent. It was also the first day of taping for the Loop's live *Chicago Rocks II* album.

Club mainstays Scraps and Champion were in fine form; particularly on the cuts selected for recording.

Southern rockers, The Roadside Band (who for some reason had a large following from Naperville) played a half-original, half-copy set. They really shook the Rock Dock with their portrayal of Lynyrd Skynyrd's, *Free Bird*.

One of the major highlights of ChicagoFest '81 occurred when England's Wishbone Ash took the stage. Guitarists Laurie Wisefield and Andy Powell were super-hot. Long-time Ash drummer Steve Upton and new bassist Trevor Bolder (ex-David Bowie, ex-Uriah Heep) rounded out the band.

They jammed and jammed and jammed; spanning the entire seventies decade. *Phoenix*, from the first album (1970) was incredible. Definitely, Wishbone Ash had given the best performance so far.

After six days of solid rocking, one would think the 'Fest rockers' appetite would have been fulfilled. But the best was yet to come.

The day of Wednesday, August 5, will long be remembered as one of Chicago's greatest rock triumphs. Local heroes Cheap Trick went wild, cranking out their famous style of rock in an emotion-packed, flawless performance.

Trick guitarist and well-known crazy man Rick Nielsen chopped and riffed like never before.

During *Gonna Raise Hell*, lead vocalist Robin Zander dropped to his knees, screaming the chorus as if it were the last concert of all time. Good old Bun E. Carlos never missed a beat on drums and newcomer Pete Comita played his bass and pedals madly, sounding like a rhythm guitarist and bassist in one. Their seventeen-song extravaganza included two head-banging versions of *Reach Out*, and *I Must Be Dreamin'* from the *Heavy Metal* movie soundtrack.

It seems that Cheap Trick, as famous as they are, have only begun to develop their greatness.

Australian bred Cold Chisel made its first ever Chicago appearance with a fine opening set. The group sounded different than what most had expected (no AC/DC power chords); playing a nice mixture of blues, pop and straight ahead rock and roll.

While the line for that show was forming alongside the Main Stage throughout the day, other rock fans were piling into the Rock Dock for a full day of music, headlined by the Joe Perry Project.

The former Aerosmith guitarist plays his custom Fenders in a style all his own. His new band (see NRN-August 1981) complements Joe nicely; and the end result is a thrashing power-boogie sound. The crashing might of, *Let The Music Do The Talkin'*, left the crowd well satisfied despite the shortness of the set.

Most of the people populating the Rock Dock that day were hard-core rockers waiting for "Smokin' Joe," and didn't seem to appreciate the newer rock provided by Garrison, Chicago's own Loose Lips and The Odd; and the re-scheduled appearance of The Kings.

"... the Kind is ... the hottest item around town right now ..."

However, the aforementioned are really good bands and can all be remembered as a vital part of that great rock and roll day.

Somewhat forgotten, but termed as one of the better performances of the 'Fest was Pennsylvania's Iron City House-rockers which displayed its hard-working R & B talent on August 6.

Rivalling the Cheap Trick/Joe Perry Project double blast-off of two nights earlier, the Main Stage presented a triple bill with .38 Special, A.R.S., and The Dregs; while Elektra recording artists New England rocked the dock.

.38 Special has come a long way in just a year ... finding huge success with its latest album, *Wild Eyed Southern Boys* and the hits, *Fantasy Girl*, and *Hold On Loosely*.

Singer Donnie Van Zant lead his charges through a neat set of Southern-type rock and roll—the best Chicago performance the band has given in its four-year existence.

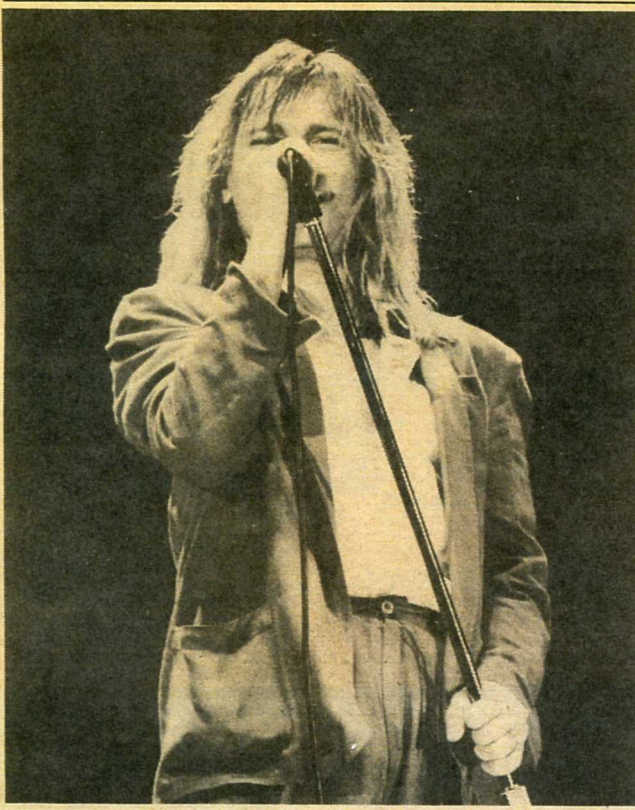
The Atlanta Rhythm Section have been on the scene a while longer, but have fallen from the big-name category in recent years. A.R.S. plays a funky, down-home style that at times is comfortingly mellow (*I'm So Into You*). When its time to boogie, they do, (*Sky High*) and define themselves with the catchy, *Champagne Jam*.

Opening the festivities were The Dregs (formerly Dixie Dregs); in support of their recently successful, *Unsung Heroes*.

An all instrumental outfit, this high energy jazz/rock/fusion style is very entertaining.

Lead guitarist Steve Morse is a natural and drummer Rod Morgenstein goes nonstop. The Dregs obviously won some new fans (and pleased the old ones) that drizzily Friday night.

A sparse crowd witnessed New England at the Rock Dock during the same time that .38 Special was taking the stage. Those in attendance were not disappointed by any means. New England has a fresh eighties sound that blends



Robin Zander of Cheap Trick.

harmonies, guitars and keyboards to produce a kind of an orchestral rock feeling.

Todd Rundgren produced and collaborated on the group's third album, *Walking Wild*, and the boys featured the new disc.

Guitarist/singer John Fannon rambled cordlessly into the audience, all the while jamming away on his "How do you like my new guitar" Fender Telecaster.

One of the more interesting rock moments of ChicagoFest '81 came with the debut of former Hounds lead singer John Hunter and his band (they opened for New England after Nathan-Coates had played).

Hunter, a native Chicagoan, is known as a real rough and ready rocker, but has settled down considerably. The music was clean and polished; sort of a Steely Dan-type sound with a harder edge.

Ex-Hounds and The Pack guitarist Glenn Rupp is with the band; but oddly, there was no bass player. Some excellent keyboard and pedal work made the need for a bassist almost obsolete.

Playing before the largest Rock Around The Dock crowd of the season (aside from opening night)—Berkeley, California's Greg Kihn Band and Chicago's The Kind kicked it out Saturday, August 8. Local rockers The Slapp and M & R Rush jammed earlier that day.

Kihn recently cancelled a European tour to continue on in the States, because his *Rockin'roll* album is doing so well.

This five piece "sixties-meets-eighties" band is always enjoyable to watch. They've been together for seven or eight years and are just now achieving some commercial success.

Leader Kihn (rhythm guitar, lead vocals) fronted great renditions of the new album's hit tunes, *The Breakup Song (They Don't Write 'Em)* and *Can't Stop Hurtin' Myself*—as well as their famous, *Roadrunner* anthem finale.

First-time viewers of these fine musicians were indeed impressed. (Everyone roared after each song.)

Also receiving enthusiastic response was the pride of Chicago, *The Kind*.

As most people know, they're the hottest item around town right now, and they thrilled all with their exciting blend of hard rock and power pop. *The Kind* wasn't its best (the sound didn't help and super guitarist Frank Capek had an off night); but they're such a great band that nobody really seemed to notice.

Of course, they played their two hit singles (*Total Insanity*, and *When You Rock*)—plus four or five new numbers which showed *The Kind's* ever-increasing versatility.

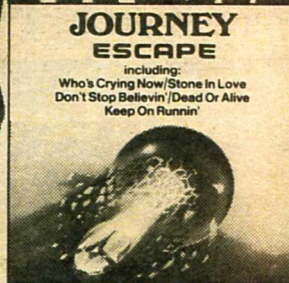
Lead singer/rhythm guitarist Frank Jalonec is developing quite a strong stage presence these days, too.

Sunday, August 9, and the final day (and night) for ChicagoFest 1981 featured Texas blues/rock boys *The Fabulous Thunderbirds* and an appearance by Milwaukee's *Sweetbottom* (which are led by Genesis-tour guitarist Daryl Stuermer.)

Looking back, it was the best ChicagoFest ever. (One also can't forget the great sounds heard at the Blues, Jazz and Country stages.)

But for rock and roll fans, and the rock and roll bands, those twelve days in August will leave a joyous memory filled with unforgettable moments and the hope for more of the same in the years to come.

ESCAPE INTO THE SOUND OF JOURNEY.

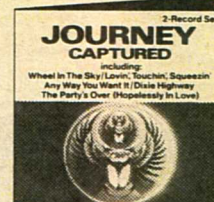


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Local Band Stars at Chicagofest

Thousands of people journeyed to the bleachers in front of the WLUP/Chicago Tribune Rock Around the Dock stage throughout this year's Chicagofest.

The events taking place there ranged from the bands on the verge of success to the bands enjoying the peak of success. The Dock was kind enough to give us such headliners as New England, Greg Kihn, Wishbone Ash, The Kings and Billy Squier.

On the night that Billy Squier headlined, the crowd was warmed-up by Snopek and Silver Condor, but heated up by Rocken Horse . . . which

proved to be the ever-demanding Chicago rockers that professional rock-n-roll does exist on the local level.

The beginning of their first set was played to interested rock fans, but by just the second song the audience became a crowd of Rocken Horse fans.

Obviously Rocken Horses' debut album has been making the rounds in the Chicago market as well. As I looked through the crowd I noticed a lot of fans singing along, which can only mean a smooth start towards a great future.

Rachel Potter

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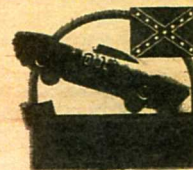
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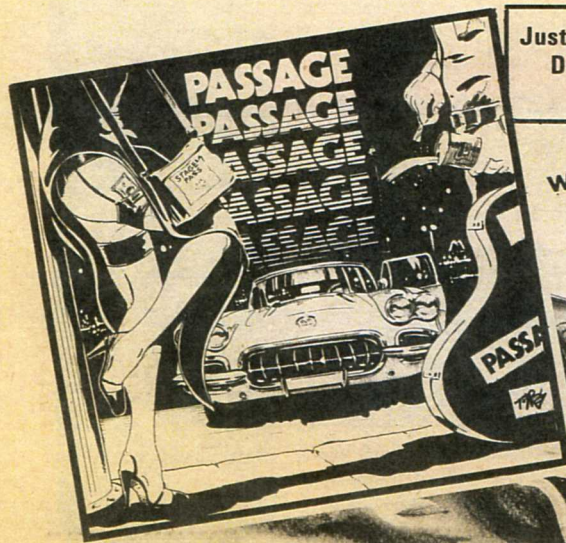
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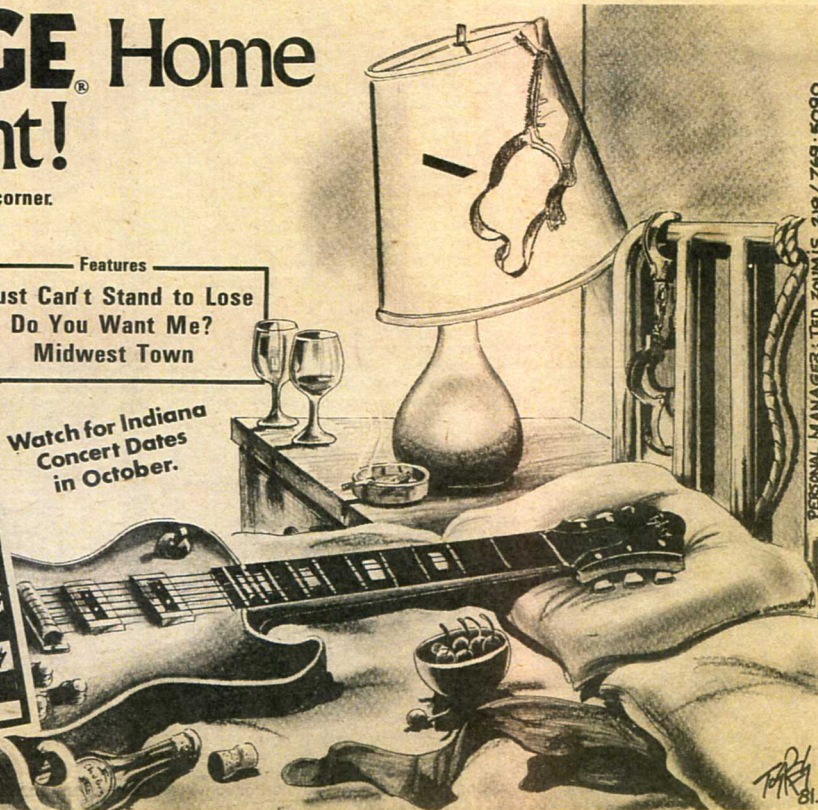
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