

Leon Thomas & Pharoah Sanders

At King Pleasure

I'll confess my prejudices in front by saying that the simple fact that Leon and Pharoah are making music together again has left me with a bad case of the 'superlatives'. As I see it, these two musicians have done more than most any others to bring the spirit of John Coltrane's music to fruition. That spirit is of complete individual freedom ascending into a selfless love, and it was expressed eloquently for two nights at King Pleasure.

Watching the quintet (which featured Joseph Bonner on piano, Shoo-Be-Doo on bass, and Tony Green on drums) I also sensed a new dimension in the evolution of this music of the spirit. It seems that, in their music, these men have so thoroughly explored *all* of their feelings and emotions that love, anger, grief, and joy all become expressions of a truth which could never be contained in any one emotion.

The music communicates a kind of spiritual sensuality in which everything one feels is real. And what you feel is not nearly so meaningful as how deeply you feel it. To feel deeply, the heart and spirit must be open. And an open heart and spirit is love. This love is not an emotion, it is the way of life.

Life! Hey, that reminds me. Up until very recently, jazz audiences have had a reputation for being somewhat more subdued than the average audience, particularly if what you're comparing it to is your basic bunch of rock-n-roll freaks like you and me. Well, both the band and the audience spent a great deal of time stompin' and hollerin' at this celebration. The music was open, expressive, and honest; the audience responded in kind, and everybody was feeling good.

The quintet flowed through performances of many of the compositions that Pharoah and Leon conceived in the late 1960's when they recorded the historic Impulse albums *Karma* and *Jewels of Thought*. Also featured was a new composition entitled *Elevation* which will be the centerpiece for a new Pharoah Sanders album which is supposed to be released any day now.

There were also some unexpected surprises like Thelonius Monk's "Straight, No Chaser" which featured Leon Thomas and his totally unique approach to scat singing. Leon would encourage the audience to sing along but they rarely needed any prompting, particularly since words, as such, were of little or no importance. But far and away my most pleasant surprise came when the quintet opened its second show with a version of "My Favorite Things" during which I could not find a face that wasn't smiling. But the highest peak seemed to be reached during the medley of recent Pharoah Sanders compositions "High Life" and "Love is Everywhere". Pharoah had this way of dancing, a kind of truckin' stomp, that he did with such obvious relish that it was tough not to shake your own. Everyone was singin' and stompin' when Pharoah leaned back, beating his chest like King Kong. That clinched

it. People were jumpin' up and screamin' and shoutin' in a musical celebration that completely transcended the usual performer-audience relationship. Love was everywhere and it came from the only place it ever can—everyone.

--Chris McCabe

Jerry Jeff Walker

At King Pleasure

Jerry Jeff Walker wandered into Ann Arbor Sunday night, Feb. 3, for a two show appearance at King Pleasure. I expected a quiet night of acoustic guitar and good singing, but what I got instead was a night of "Texas rock and roll", because Jerry fooled everyone and brought along a nine-piece band, including a three-man brass section. Jerry Jeff is only one of many famous (infamous) Texan musicians including Doug Sahm and Townes van Zandt (both of whose songs he played) who make the rounds today, bringing the distinctive Texas sound to the rest of the world. Jerry Jeff is more well-known than the others because he wrote the oft-recorded "Mr. Bojangles", but when he sang it Sunday it was "Texas as can be."

Texas rock and roll can't really be compared to Michigan's variety, except to say that both use electric instruments, both are good and loud, and both are proud of their origins. Texas rock and roll has a lot of country in it, a little swing, and a lot of good singing. Jerry's band ("just a bunch of my friends") was a good Texas band—even when they did a few of their own numbers—and with Jerry they spent the night extolling the virtues of all things Texan, whether women, wine, or weather.

Unfortunately, Jerry chose to sing all of his more famous songs (the ones from his MCA album, *L.A. Freeway*) in his first set, while relying on lesser-known, or other people's songs during the second. It was not a very good balance. But Jerry is spontaneous and does the first tune that comes to mind, and once he got started on the hits the first set there was just no stopping.

Nonetheless, it was a good night of music. Jerry is quite a personable fellow, almost as famous for his life off-stage as for his on-stage performances. In the middle of the second set Sunday, after a Willis Alan Ramsey song about Texas women being Texas gold, Jerry Jeff asked for a Bud. Somebody offered him a Heineken. Needless to say, Texan Jerry Jeff Walker turned it down and waited for the Bud.

--Lauren Jones

Bob Dylan

At Crisler Arena

Bob Dylan and the Band came to Crisler Arena February 2nd. For 2 1/2 hours they totally captivated a crowd of 14,000, some of whom had officially paid as much as \$8.50 (and up to \$100 from scalpers) to take part in the cultural/mythical event. While no concert ought to cost so much, compared on a relative rip-off scale to say \$7.00 for Black Sabbath, or \$12 for the Stones, this one was well worth it.

Dylan and the Band came out to thundering applause for the first song, a great version of "You Go Your Way and I'll Go Mine," which set the tone for the evening. The music was loud (heavy, some might say) and tight. Bill Graham as usual had everything taken care of as far as sound and sight are concerned—every facet of the music was audible throughout Crisler, which is an achievement in itself, and the lighting was just right. The Band plays great back-up for Dylan, so tight as a group you'd think they had been playing together for six years for fun or something. Dylan sang clearly; he spat out the words so that everybody in the house could savor them. After six years of being besieged by fans to make his feelings known again, Dylan wasn't going to have anybody misunderstanding him.

What Dylan was making sure that we understood was that he just isn't interested in being seen as the prophet or leader by a generation of youth anymore. As he once said in another song, "Don't go mistaking paradise for that home across the road."—the point is that 5,000,000 people tried to get tickets so Dylan could tell them that he just doesn't want to be The One. In one of the peaks of the first part of the concert Dylan snapped out a raunchy, sardonic version of "It ain't me Babe", relying on one of his earliest and most famous songs to get his point across.

The Band played a set of their own songs before the intermission. It was a good set of songs, all from the first three Band albums, but everytime they seemed about to break out and shake the house a little they held back. The vocals were excellent and Robbie Robertson is a great guitarist, but the Band's two sets (another in the middle of the post-intermission part of the concert) just weren't up to the level of the rest of the concert: the night was Dylan's.

Dylan came out after the short intermission with just his guitar and harmonica. It was clear that he did not relish this part

of the concert nearly as much as the electric part --at the end he tore off the acoustic guitar and threw down the harmonica holder. But it was during the acoustic set that things really began to get off the ground. He sang telling versions of "Gates of Eden" and "It's Alright Ma," which together with an earlier, spirited version of "Ballad of a Thin Man" proved the continuing strength and relevance of Dylan's poetry, and more importantly, a continuing belief by the audience in what Dylan has to say.

(The "Ballad" segment, by the way, featured some great Little Richard/Jerry Lee Lewis influenced piano stomping by Mr. D.)

It does seem unfortunate to me that Dylan feels he has to make so much money out of the concert series. He took \$75-80,000 out of Crisler Saturday, which is a whole lot of money. There are so many other uses for that kind of money that it seems odd that this man who speaks so wonderfully about what the world might be would come into a community which is trying to create a little of that world, and take off with a fantastic sum of money which could instead be put back into the community's growth. But then who am I to tell Dylan what to do—he doesn't want to tell me after all?

And then of course, there is the question of what happened to those front row tickets, and why anybody who got those good tickets paid at least \$50 per seat. As the *Michigan Daily* reported, this whole thing was a rip-off a lot closer to home. But considering the kind of money involved in the tour (and let us not forget that millionaire Promoter Bill Graham is in on the take for 15%) it's not terribly surprising that other promoters might want more than their share too. The worst thing about it is that 1000 people paid a lot more for the concert than anyone ought to.

But let's forget about money for now. After all, it was music that made the evening. Dylan came, and he played and sang for a couple of hours, and he left. But in that time he took a crowd of 14,000 through 10 years of important music, and finally brought the entire audience screaming to its feet with a powerful, inspirational "Like a Rolling Stone". Crisler was a sea of moving, moved people, all trying to believe, all caught up in the moment: "How does it feel, to be without a home, to be on your own, like a complete unknown, like a rolling stone." An entire generation tumbling down history together, clapping their hands in time.

There was an encore. Dylan and the Band came back on the stage to say once again, as they had opened the concert, that we can all go our way, but Dylan will go his. I say let him. It was a great concert. Now about all that money...

--Lauren Jones

Joni Mitchell

At Hill Auditorium

Joni Mitchell, the siren of love and sorrow, brought her show into Hill Auditorium on Jan. 26th. It was like any other Joni Mitchell concert: if you like Joni's music it was great, and if you don't, well, you probably didn't go. She consistently puts on good concerts which highlight her con-

continued on page 14