

Band flips on electricity

By PETE OPPEL

Entertainment Editor of The News

UNCLE WALT'S BAND, apparently afraid its soft acoustic sound is too subtle for the average nightclub or concert audience, went electric during a weekend performance at Poor David's Pub.

Walter Hyatt, normally associated with the acoustic guitar, played electric rhythm guitar; Champ Hood, known for playing the fiddle, concentrated on electric lead; and David Ball swapped his stand-up bass for an electric one.

Hood did play fiddle on a couple of country-oriented tunes, but the electric guitar lineup was the one that the band employed the most.

The band also has added a drummer.

This change was not expected to come this early, Hyatt said between sets Friday night.

"Our new drummer just worked himself in a lot sooner than we expected," he said.

But one thing does carry over from the old cult favorite and that's the band's outstanding harmonies. None of the three is an especially captivating soloist, although Ball is a pretty good singer. But when their voices blend, the results are stunning.

The overall sound of the band is quite reminiscent of the original Bees Knees, a Dallas band of some renown. The difference is that the Bees Knees had a vocalist in Roger Burton, who could carry leads better than anyone in Uncle Walt's group. But Uncle Walt's has more stage presence, much more charisma. Where the Bees Knees always seemed a little detached, Uncle Walt's Band is embraceable.

Most of the tunes played by Uncle Walt's Band were originals, covers of obscure songs familiar only to musicologists, or renditions of such standards as *Ruby*, *Sittin' on Top of the World* and *Rock Island Line*, which Hyatt, Ball and Hood sang a capella. Among the best of the original tunes was a Hood composition called *The Last One To Know*.

Incidentally, David Card, the man responsible for Poor David's Pub and a person intent on bringing an alternative to the Dallas club scene, is going to feature another outstanding artist, Townes Van Zandt, Dec. 28 and 29. Among Van Zandt's accomplishments is the song, *Pancho and Lefty*, recorded most recently and most compellingly by Emmyliou Harris.

Card also features bluegrass bands in his club every Sunday.