

Rocky Mountain Showcase Peaks

BY PETER M. JONES

DENVER—Under the new direction of veteran record producer Jim Mason, the nonprofit Rocky Mountain Music Assn. scaled back its annual talent showcase this year. Music Fest '92, held Feb. 14-16, featured just more than 80 regional acts, compared with last year, when more than 130 Colorado artists hit the stage.

Music Fest '91 proved unworkable, (Continued on page 30)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SHOWCASE PEAKS

(Continued from page 18)

says Mason. "You can't manage 135 events in one weekend with a volunteer staff. It dilutes what we intend to do."

Mason, whose production credits include Poco and Firefall, has changed the event's long-term goals. Under the organization's previous director, plans called for expanding Music Fest to a cap of 200 artists.

NARAS president Michael Greene gave the keynote address, encouraging the faithful to trudge forth through the frustrations of a local music scene. Representatives were on hand from ASCAP, BMI, Famous Music, Concerts West, EMI, Asylum, Atlantic, and SBK Records. Music Fest was sponsored by NARAS, BMI, and KBCO Denver.

Coupled with a day of industry panels, the showcases brought to-

gether a broad cross-section of the region's most noteworthy unsigned talent. Truth Of The Matter, a quartet emphasizing Byrds-influenced harmony vocals, was an exceptional audience highlight at the "roots rock" showcase.

China My Eyes, Twice Wilted, and Life Explodes attracted verbal praise from industry pros at the alternative rock shows. A.O.A., a powerful funk-driven jazz outfit, brought a packed house to one of Saturday night's earliest sets.

Other acts drawing notice over the weekend included country favorites Tom Stipe and Ruthie Garrett, the rap/reggae/rock fusion of the Jonez, and the aptly named Psychedelic Zombiez.

Music Fest was not without its surprises. Colorado-based Rick Roberts, the Firefall mainstay and former Burrito Brother, played an unannounced acoustic set at the roots-rock showcase. A re-formed Firefall is reportedly label shopping. Jazz musician Gary Burton performed in support of the Grammy In The Schools program.

Last year's Music Fest, held in April, conflicted with the Northwest Area Music Assn. conference in Seattle, cutting into potential industry attendance. The February date is also more attractive to skiers, says Mason, and more in line with record industry fiscal cycles. "We're just at the beginning of the upswing of the most down time in the industry," he says.

As of yet, no artist has been signed to a recording contract as the direct result of Music Fest. But according to Mason, it is just a matter of time. "We're not dream merchants," he says. "We're trying to raise the level of education."

PETER JONES

BILLBOARD DECEMBER 3, 1994

BILLBOARD MARCH 7, 1992

ARTISTS IN CONCERT

SPINAL TAP

Paramount Theater, Denver

HEAVY-METAL CLICHES were in full force at this May 26 show. From the horned skull overlooking the stage to the self-indulgent guitar solos, there was no mistaking the semi-legendary Spinal Tap, playing one of the first dates on a tour showcasing its MCA "comeback" album, "Break Like The Wind."

Always a proud slave to its image, the gracelessly aging band provided not just the standard fare of "Big Bottom" et al., but also its signature technical difficulties. And volume was pushed to an earsplitting "11."

Along with the expected ration of Satanism and egregious sex, Spinal

Tap played homage to all of rock's three-chord pomposity. Don't miss the Stonehenge (now down to nine inches), the obligatory acoustic set, and Nigel Tufnel's (Christopher Guest's) excruciatingly boring guitar solo. As the epic instrumental continued ad nauseam, a video screen showed band mates David St. Hubbins (Michael McKean) and Derek Smalls (Harry Shearer) passing the time backstage—St. Hubbins got a facial; Smalls took a limo to a restaurant.

Most of Spinal Tap's convincing "Break Like The Wind" album was featured in concert, as was a retrospective of the band's mythical career—now spanning more than a

(Continued on page 15)

ing the allegations, but denies reports that the Secret Service has interviewed him or that the FBI has confiscated tapes of his show.

Seidholz says Baker is welcome to return to the station. "My big concern is that we'll lose a little bit of Chuck Baker," he says. "It won't be good radio."

ARTISTS IN CONCERT

(Continued from page 13)

quarter century. In the course of the show, Tap served up its British blues/rock roots ("Gimme Some Money"), psychedelic flirtations ("Listen To The Flower People"), and metal expressionism ("Sex Farm"), all replete with the appropriate genre banalities. St. Hubbins is particularly proficient at hackneyed heavy metal shrieks, especially on "Diva Fever" ("Can't Go Back to Waterloooooo . . .").

"Just Begin Again" was a sort of duet with Cher. While St. Hubbins delivered his vocals live, various photos of Cher, with superimposed moving lips, were seen on a large video screen. "I would have been here myself," said St. Hubbins, reading a letter from Cher, "if it weren't for the fact that I chose not to"

Among the many technical plagues of the evening, birds failed to fly from the stage during the closing encore. "It usually works," said Smalls after the concert. And no puppet show? "No room on the bus," explained Smalls.

As this artificial band heads closer to reality, Spinal Tap may become an old joke in the process. As of this tour, the "band" still seems comfortably fictional. But as Spinal Tap continues to bridge the gap between reality and parody, it may be difficult to ever see Black Sabbath the same way again, and Status Quo may get a whole new audience.

PETER M. JONES