

MENDELSON JOE MEETS THE MEDIA

PROMOTING "NOT HOMOGENIZED"

Interview by Dave Dobson
 Story by John Cairns

Mendelson Joe, established songwriter, performer and painter, was in Charlotte-town on November 19. He was here on the Eastern swing of a cross Canada tour promoting his latest album, "Not Homogenized". While here, he spoke with Dave Dobson who was representing CIMN and the SUN. Their conversation went as follows:

Dave - Mendelson Joe, how did that name come about? Is there a story behind it?

Mr. Joe - Well, the story is that my parents' name, their surname, is Mendelson, and one of my Christian names is Joseph. All I did was reverse the two names.

Dave - Would you tell us a bit about the album "Not Homogenized"?

Mr. Joe - Actually, the title you just mentioned really says it all. "Not Homogenized", it's not your standard bacon pabulum with lyrics built to dispose of. It's unique, and if people call it easy listening, I take that as a compliment. It is easy to listen to if you care to listen. It is not background music. It's pointed, electric, Canadian folk music, and the idioms go from everything from Rock and Roll to blues music to jug band music.

Dave - Is there a band that backs you up or are you on your own?

Mr. Joe - When I perform on the record I have people accompanying me who perform with me on certain jobs under the name Mendelson Joe All Stars. These people are all highly developed musicians, probably the best in the world for what they do. Canada has musicians as good as any in the world. It's just that the focus has not been put on Canadian music as it should.

Dave - You're touring the Maritimes now. Where are you heading from here?

Mr. Joe - Next I go to Halifax for a couple of days. Then to Ottawa, and then to Montreal. After that, I will have completed what would be loosely construed as a national tour because I just did Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver. That is not to say there aren't other cities that are a part of our nation, but those are the ones I want.

Dave - In some press I was reading it mentions you are 35. How long have you been in the business?

Mr. Joe - Professionally, I've been performing for money 16 years, but I've been playing guitar for 24 years. I'm self taught. "Not Homogenized" is my eighth album to be released in Canada, but it is my

first with Boot Records.

Dave - You were with a group before known as McKenna Mendelson Mainline. The music they played was close to heavy rock. Is that correct?

Mr. Joe - I'd call it blues rock, yes.

Dave - Your music on "Not Homogenized" seems to be more easy listening blues. It is not so much heavy rock.

Mr. Joe - Yes, my attack now is a little bit more mellow. That is what I would call it. My music is still very rhythmic and specific. The songs are very direct, but the attack is just a little more mellow.

Dave - Where do you get your ideas for your music? Do you think it over for a day or a week or do you just get an idea and write it down?

Mr. Joe - Both. Sometimes I'll write a song in lyrics or come up with a musical idea in five minutes. You could write a song in a half hour or you could write a song in a year of just refining an idea. It is very strange. It is not like a painting where you think of the idea and then you labour at it. In painting it is like building a house. You design the work and then you dig the hole and build it. Songs are very strange. They can be magical.

Dave - Your goal is the world?

Mr. Joe - Yes.

Dave - Your eight albums so far are Canadian albums.

Mr. Joe - Well, they've been released in other countries. My goal is that the world know Mendelson Joe and consume my music. It will make the world a better place.

Dave - You've been called a Canadian Alice Cooper with the lyrical abilities of Randy Newman. Are all your songs written by yourself?

Mr. Joe - Yes, I've written a couple of songs with other people, but by myself I've written about 350 of what I consider fine completed works.

Dave - You're not known in Canada the way I'm sure you'd like. In Toronto you seem to be known as a painter, not as a musician.

Mr. Joe - Well, you probably got that from some of the press you read. I don't agree with that. I think in Canada in a small way from coast to coast I'm known, but I'm not Anne Murray. That's what it boils down to. In most university circles there are always some young people who have some of my records. I'd say that I'm basically a well-known unknown.

Dave - After listening to your latest album I can tell you I thoroughly enjoyed it. It is a change from the music they play on the commercial radio. I only wish they could change the pace and play more of Mendelson Joe and "Not Homogenized". We honestly hope that your record sells big in Atlantic Canada. Thank you for talking with me today.

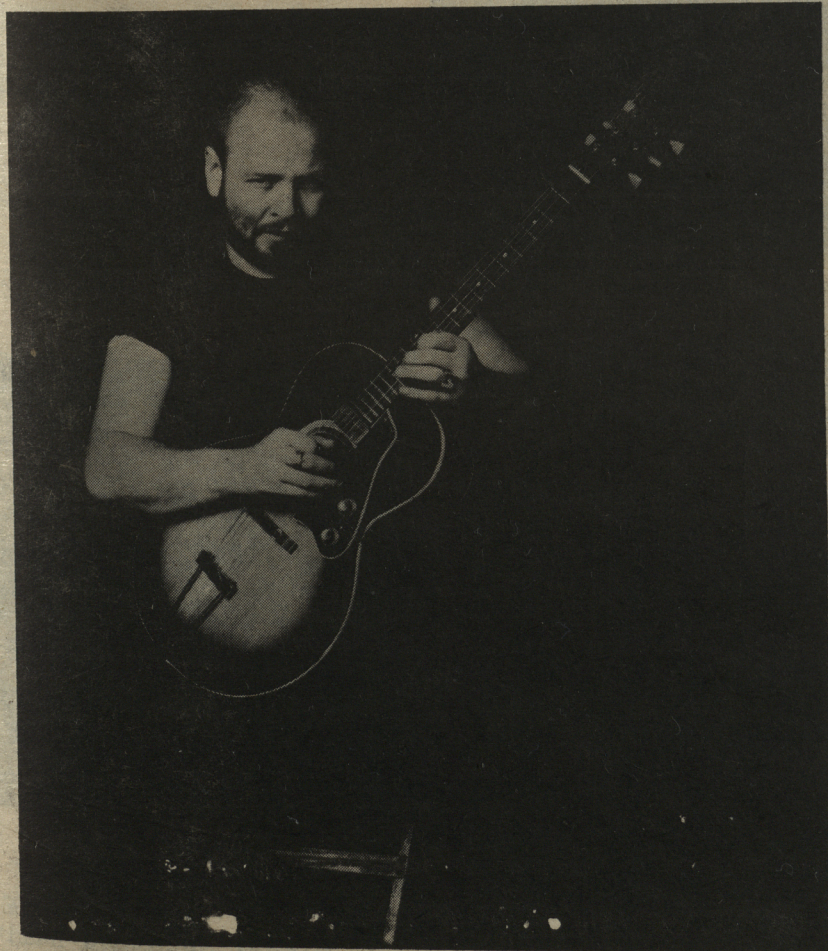
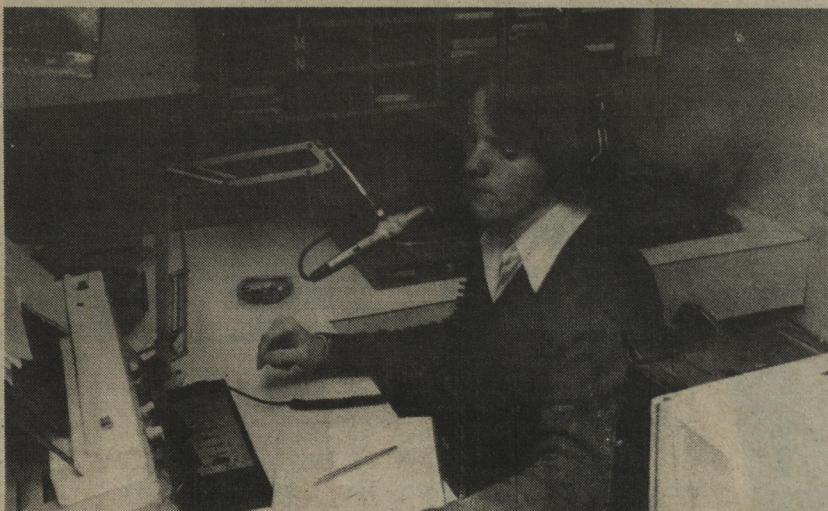


Photo by Andrew Danson

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