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REVOLUTIONS MUSIC REVIEWS

The CIMN Interview

Tom Hopper, Vocalist and Bass Player with the Grapes of Wrath spoke to Rodney St-Pierre station manager of CIMN Radio, on Thursday, October 26. The following is an excerpt from that conversation:

CIMN: I just heard your latest recording, "Now and Again" went gold (50,000 sales). Congratulations on that.

Grapes: thanks, that was about three weeks ago, hopefully it'll go over platinum, They're talking that it'll go platinum, unless all of a sudden it completely dies, but I shouldn't complain, a gold record's great.

CIMN: How did Treehouse (Album previously released by the Grapes of Wrath) do, was it as successful as this one?

Grapes: No, we thought it was, it was getting close to gold, but it kind of stalled at around 39,000-40,000 (record sales), and it's about 42,000 or 43,000 now. So you never know, this record might push Treehouse as well.

CIMN: Some other bands say they don't pay much attention to how many albums they sell just as long as they make a good album. Do you guys keep an eye on record sales?

Grapes: Well, if you're a big band and you're used to selling hundreds of thousands of records, it's like no big deal I guess. If we made a good record and it didn't go gold we'd be happy that we did make this record, because it doesn't matter how many you sell, as long as it's good. But we still like to keep an eye on record sales because we have to make a living off of it.

CIMN: So are you touring with Blue Rodeo right now?

Grapes: No, we're touring by ourselves. We're playing in Baltimore tonight and we played a few backup spots for Billy Bragg the other night in Philadelphia and now we're playing this music seminar in New York on Saturday night. Then we're doing a few shows with Blue Rodeo in the

Maritimes, flying to Toronto and then flying home. (Vancouver)

CIMN: Do you guys think that you're a good live band?

Grapes: We're not a flash type of band, the kind of band that jumps around the stage and throws beer on people and stuff like that. We don't have the "Big Stage" show. We get into playing live. I love playing live, so we just try to get into the songs the best we can for people and play for people. Some people think we're horrible live and some people think we're great.

CIMN: What's the furthest place you've played at and the best place?

Grapes: Vancouver is a pretty good place. We've got a pretty good following there. Everywhere in Canada is always great to play. The States is interesting too. The south is cool, like Texas and Georgia was great. The furthest place we've ever played was Florida, I guess. We've never been to Europe. We're probably going to go in the spring. There's talk of Spain. I think Spain wants us.

CIMN: Do you have a release over there?

Grapes: Yes, they're going to release it ("Now and Again"), and Treehouse is in Scandinavia and Hong Kong. It's going to be released in Germany and England hopefully.

CIMN: Do you think for a new band starting out that the choice of a name for a band is an important one and so you think the name that you choose can affect the success that the band achieves?

Grapes: I used to think that, but then look at the Cowboy Junkies! I think that they're a great band, with a name like that, I couldn't believe they got as much success as they did. I thought people would freak out with a name like Cowboy Junkies. So I think if you have a really stupid name, it might do something, but if the music's great, the

name always sounds better.

CIMN: Who writes in the bands, is it a shared effort?

Grapes: Basically, what happens is Kevin (Vocalist/Guitars) or I will bring up a song idea and the band will hammer it out and whoever sings it will have written the words. The starting idea comes from Kevin or myself.

CIMN: How did Vincent Jones, you Keyboardist, join the bands was he a friend of the band, or did you put up a "Musician's Wanted" add?

Grapes: He joined us after Treehouse was released. He's toured with us ever since Treehouse but just became a member before we started recording this album. We placed an ad in the "Georgia Strait", which is a musician's weekly paper in Vancouver, and he was the second call that we got. It worked out perfectly, we were into the same kind of music and we haven't thought about anyone else since, he's really an incredibly good player.

CIMN: About the music that you guys listen to, do you all share the same musical influences?

Grapes: Basically, but we learn to play different stuff too, not completely but we all have our basic other things that we're into. There's bands like the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and the Who, bands that we all think are great, but then we're all into special kinds of bands as well that each of us don't like. We all have some of the same tastes and same different ones as well.

CIMN: What bands are you listening to and like?

Grapes: I like the new KD Lang. I think "Trail of Broken Hearts" is an incredible song. I like Gordon Lightfoot a lot, I like Cowboy Junkies a lot, the Beatles, they are my favorite band of course, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd. Not that only listen to old stuff, I like Edie Brickell a lot too. She writes really good words.

CIMN: I've heard someone

say that on your latest album, "Now and Again", especially on the tracks "All the things I wasn't" and "But I guess we'll never know" that you sound a lot like Simon and Garfunkel. Do you think that's a good comparison.

Grapes: I don't know, people have said that before. I like Simon and Garfunkel a lot, but I never really heard the comparison myself. The guitar playing could be similar... I don't really think... well, Maybe!!! It's hard to compare our music to anything else because it's ours and we think it sounds like us.

CIMN: The biography that we have on the band says that this album deals more with universal feelings rather than personal aspects of family, small town life and parental influences. Was this change planned or was this something that just occurred?

Grapes: On Treehouse, a lot of the songs was written right after we moved from small town Kelona. So a lot of the words were about that because that's what was going on in our lives. When we write songs now we don't make an effort to write about a certain topic. It's gotta be about what's happened to us. So what happened after Treehouse was we had been living in Vancouver, we had toured, so we kind of had a new life now, so all the writing's changed because the lifestyle's changed.

CIMN: The song, "Backward's Town", is that about a particular town?

Grapes: It was written by Kevin about him leaving Kelona and his girlfriend who is still living there. A lot of people in Kelona think we're putting down the city, but it's not really a put down on the city, it's like a despair of all small towns and having to leave and how hard it is to live there too. So it's not really about any particular city, but any small town in Canada.

CIMN: Personally listening to

your music, I think a lot of your lyrics evoke insecurities.

Grapes: That's more Kevin's lyrics, I think. Kevin and I write differently, but it's more uncertainty than insecurities. I don't really want to make a statement about Kevin's words.

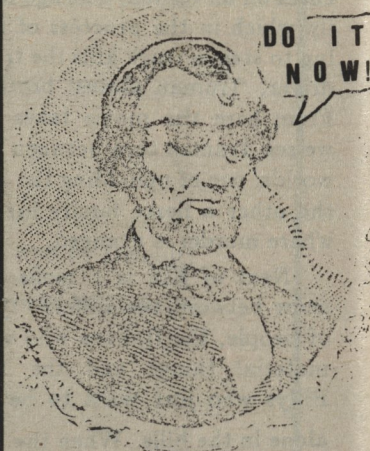
CIMN: Who wrote "All the things I wasn't"?

Grapes: That was Kevin.

(The Grapes of Wrath are currently touring the Maritimes this week with Blue Rodeo)

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