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MUSIC

Review:

The Yanks

The Yanks from San Francisco present their brand of Pop Rock as any serious musician would—deviating from the generic, making personal statements, and hoping the audience will accept what they present. They deliver appealing rhythms, lyrics dripping with metaphors about intensely descriptive feelings, and a beguiling performance.

On Tuesday, Dec. 4, the Yanks played at the Factory-Edison's Bar in Springfield. Tuesday night's show was the first leg of a five-day tour that went on to Portland and Seattle.

Despite a pitiful crowd of only about two dozen people (the event was not well publicized), the Yanks presented a persuasive performance which kept most of the small crowd on the dance floor.

Lead singer Owen Masterson opened the show by purring into the microphone, "Gentlemen, choose your partner." Masterson cuts a dashing figure with his gypsy trappings, chiselled facial structure and geometric red hair. He is, by far, the most visible stage presence as he sings and twists his tall, lanky frame seductively, frequently gesturing with his long arms.

Masterson is also the group poet and is the band member responsible for most of the lyrics which center around emotional relationships and irreverent alienation. These are not your typical "baby, baby" songs. They deal with the deeper, more personal details of relationships with lovers and friends. In songs like *Scandal Rocks High Society* the lyrics suggest isolation on the part of the singer towards the "countess who dumps her royal hubby." Masterson says, "I've always written." His lyric writing began with blues and "somewhere along the line it became Pop poetry."

Although other band members are quite a bit less visible, their



Photograph by David Stein.

Owen Masterson, songwriter and lead singer of The Yanks, who performed at Edison's Bar last week.

presence and contributions are not lost or easily forgettable.

Jack Johnson, playing guitar and performing vocally, hunches over his guitar introspectively. His playing ranges from offbeat leads to frequent use of feedback. Paul Zahl, the drummer, also sings as he plays. His furious drumming and vivid facial expressions make a strong visual contribution as well as forming an energetic beat for the others to follow. The newest band member, Steve Aliment on bass, provides a solid bass track and also vocal harmonies that meld well with the other players.

The most requested song Tuesday evening was a licentious love tale entitled *Saddle Up*. Again, not your typical lewd-type song because of Masterson's lyrics and the offbeat melody.

The Yanks have released two albums—*Only Lovers Left Alive* and the most recent *Made in the States*. Their live sound is more impressive, possibly because of the visual impression. Occasionally Tuesday night's performing seemed a bit loose but key changes and pauses in the beat were incorporated by the players comfortably without faltering.

—Jackie Barry

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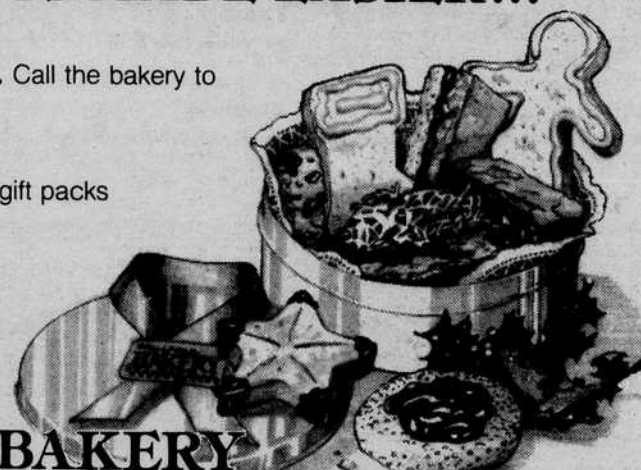
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