

Our hero's first words were 'where's the pisser?'

were going. At this time we were trying to feel confident that we would sell enough tickets to break even. In addition the plans for the airport welcome were moving at breakneck speed.

The Roosevelt Junior High School Band wanted to play for the welcoming ceremony. The rally girls from Roosevelt worked up a routine spelling out Dan Hicks and adding a few choice phrases. We found a 1948 Chrysler convertible to transport the group. Press releases were sent to all the local media. The Emerald planned to cover the event with a reporter and a photographer. And various loose individuals from the community all promised to lend their presence to the festive occasion.

The day before the concert we received the best news possible. Enough tickets had been sold that we were assured of breaking even. We had both kicked in over \$1,000 of our own money by then and it was sure a good feeling to know we would get it back. I have never stuck my neck on the line like that before and it created quite a bit of tenseness and tightening in the area of my stomach.

By this time both Charlie and I had been besieged by scores of "friends" who heard we were doing the Dan Hicks Concert and wondered if we had any extra tickets. We didn't have any. The Cultural Forum allowed us 10 complimentary tickets, five each, and they didn't go very far.

D-Day, November 10th arrived. I woke up with a headache and a knot in my stomach. I decided I had to loosen up some so that I would be able to function through the day so I had a short "number" for breakfast. It set the tone for the rest of the day and late into the following morning. Concerts are supposed to be enjoyable experiences, fun and a good time for everyone, but somehow the fun part had slipped by us without our ever realizing it had been there.

The late show was now sold out and tickets for the early show seemed to be moving well. Now if our dream group "Hicks and the Lickettes" showed up we figured we would have a success on our hands.

The scheduled departure time for Mahlon Sweet Airport and the welcoming ceremony was 3:30 p.m. We gathered up as many assorted freaks as we could find and headed for the airport. By this time I was having trouble negotiating my automobile through the traffic of downtown Eugene. I knew if I didn't stop smoking and drinking I'd never be able to make the drive back.

I continued to smoke and drink.

At the airport a crowd of about 200 rowdies waited for the arrival of the Hicks Express—scheduled for 4:30. At 5:00 there was still no sign of the plane. The 40 member Roosevelt Junior High

School Band was getting a little anxious, everyone else was getting a little of anything they could get their hands on. The rally squad kept practicing their routine hoping they could do a perfect job if the plane ever made it. By now it wouldn't have surprised me if the plane never landed. I was becoming tired of the hassles involved with doing a concert.

At about ten after five we got word from airport officials that the plane was making its approach. I got excited. What was I going to say to Dan Hicks? The band regrouped and did a final bit of tuning as the plane taxied towards the waiting crowd. The plane wasn't quite as big as everyone had expected, a twin engine job that seated ten.

The plane stopped and turned its engines off. The door opened, the stairs came down and out stepped our hero Dan Hicks (applause and cheers). The Band broke into a rendition of "Hail To The Chief." The rally squad was going nuts, jumping up and down and waving their pom-poms. I walked up to greet Dan with a "warm hello."

The first words out of his mouth were "where's the pisser?" All he wanted to do was to go to the bathroom. The band had been drinking before they left the Bay area and had fully expected to be able to relieve themselves on the plane. Only one problem; the plane didn't have a bathroom. They had all been in pain for almost two hours.

They tried to get the pilot to stop at the end of the runway but he wouldn't have anything to do with it. So while all the festivities continued; the band, the pom-pom girls, the crowd and the Emerald reporter asking questions, Hicks was forced to stay and pretend he was having a good time when inside he was dying a slow death. As soon as the band finished and the rally squad did their routine, Hicks sprinted for the

terminal and probably one of the nicer highs he has ever gotten.

An hour before show time everything looked pretty good. The band was down in the fishbowl gorging themselves on hamburgers and fries. Melvin the Magician was preparing his equipment for his part of the show and Charlie and I were emotionally and physically exhausted. We had spent the whole morning bringing in the huge plants that were now in place on the stage and the afternoon was spent trying to get the sound system set up before we took off for the airport.

Showtime. The introductions were made and Melvin took the stage. It was hard to tell if anyone liked him or not. People just couldn't figure out if he was for real. He was trying to be, but somehow things just didn't work out for him. His rabbit jumped out of the hat before he was ready, he couldn't get the swords through the case that contained his sister (who acted as his assistant), nothing seemed to work. We had known that Mel was no Houdini but we had thought that people would be able to get into him anyway. Some did and some didn't.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dan Hicks and his Hot Licks (applause). Thank God they were finally on stage. Up until the last minute we were still unsure if good ol' Dan was going to be able to function long enough to get through both shows. He was burning out faster all the time. For the second show we had to drag him from the lobby and set him on the stage. But he somehow managed to make it through, how I'll never know.

It was amazing to watch a man who was obviously in no condition to even carry on a conversation go through an act and do it so well. The group was good. Excellent musicians, good vocals, just some very fine music. Still I kept waiting for Dan to pass out, I

figured it could come any minute. He made it through, what a trouper.

I don't know what the feeling of the audience was towards the show. I think there are two differing opinions. Some found the show to be insulting and dead. Others found the show to be exciting and lively. The main problem with the second show was the number of people who attended, more than desirable. The first show seemed to move much better because the audience was half the size of the second and Hicks seemed to still be breathing. By this time I had gotten to the point that it didn't matter what happened. I just couldn't muster up enough strength to care.

After the concert was over we spent about an hour trying to round up the band and get them into cars to take them to the airport. It was pretty humorous. We would get everybody but one together and then by the time we found the missing member the others were spread all over again. We finally deposited the band at the airport and tried to crash.

100 per cent wired.

Was the concert a success?

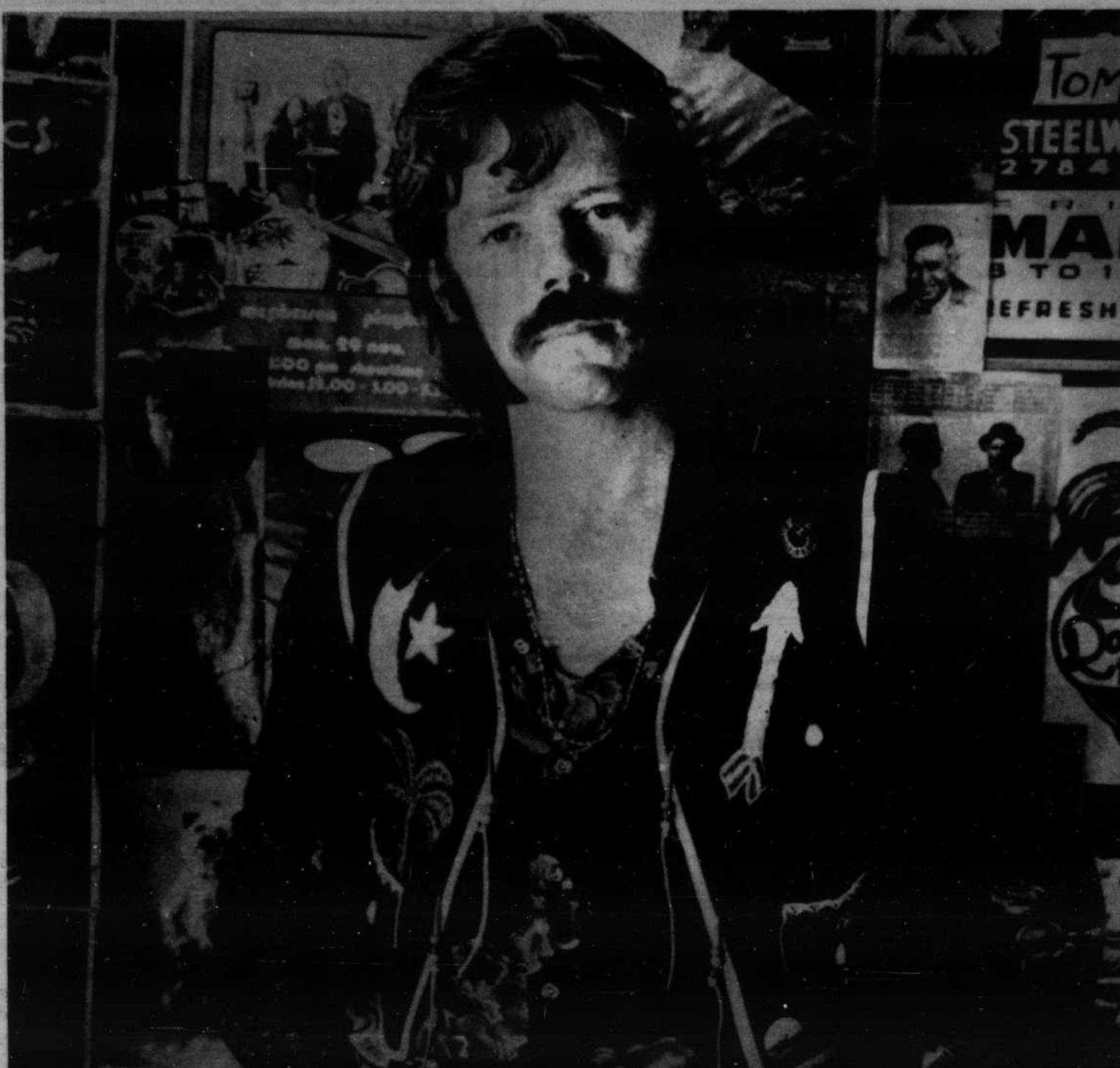
I don't know. We made a profit, but it really wasn't worth the risk we took. We enjoyed the experience and learned a lot from it. I realize now that when dealing with rock musicians you're dealing with "star mentality." We had a dream show that just didn't function as dreamed. But the experience that lived with me for that month will always be remembered, how could I forget it?

So here I am again, wondering why there aren't more concerts in this town. I'd like to do another one someday, maybe the Beatles and the Stones on the same bill, headlined of course by Melvin the Magician.

When will I ever wake up?

Never . . . hopefully.

Bruce Micklus



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