

in concert



Alex Colescott and Mike Russo.

Photo by Peter Wilson

Mike Russo's blues guitar

Portland blues guitarist Mike Russo played in the EMU Ballroom Friday night, sponsored by the University Folk Club, and it was the kind of concert where the audience smiles and the performers are at their best.

Eugene folksingers Eric Park and Patty Larkin played first, doing mostly original songs with good guitar playing and nice harmonies. They ended their set with the "Old Willamette Rag," everyone clapping, stomping their feet, and singing along.

Mike Russo played with the greatest enthusiasm, booming out verses with a rough voice, rougher than usual, he said, because of a cold, and taking off into difficult leads with a pained expression on his face like he didn't believe he was going to make it through, then smiling when he got back to the main part. He's an easy-going performer, who obviously loves what he's doing.

Songs ranged from well-known blues like "Baby Please Don't Go" to Woody Guthrie songs and country-western. A lot of the tunes were his own compositions and rearrangements of oldies like "Stack O'Lee," updated with lines like, "You want all my money, and my brand new Cadillac."

Toward the end of the set, Eugene guitarist Alex Colescott joined Russo, trading off leads and singing. Colescott sang "Frankie and Johnnie" while Russo played fiddle, and they did some bluegrass tunes. Before playing an instrumental called "Flat Top Fling," Russo said, "I recorded it, wished I hadn't...Didn't play it right. We'll see if we can fix it up for you." They fixed it up all right—it was the hottest tune of the concert.

Alex Colescott's guitar playing was perfect, without stumbles

even at Russo's incredible tempos. He doesn't perform often in Eugene, and it's too bad, because he's surely one of the best guitarists in town.

They did the last song and jumped off the cafeteria table stage while everyone clapped and stomped and shouted for an encore. Russo turned with mock surprise and said, "more?" and everyone stomped and shouted harder, so they climbed up again and burst into a driving rock and roll song.

It was one of the best concerts of the year, and I hope Mike Russo gets back to Eugene again soon.

Peter Wilson

rock on

A small Editorial Comment...In these days of Watergate, the Middle East crisis and the energy crisis, it is easy to lose track of other very important issues. One of them happens to be the state of the economy. Everybody is paying more for everything. And as the prices of necessities go up, so do the prices of non-essential items, music being one of them. In case you haven't noticed, it costs you nearly \$5 for a concert ticket now days. It doesn't matter who the group is, \$5 seems to be the minimum price. An exception to this are some of the concerts at the University, where the Cultural Forum is simply trying to come as close to breaking even as it can. It is not right to simply put all the blame on the promoters—they are really not the ones at fault. They are forced to charge ridiculous prices because of the price they must pay to get a band to play. A small example is the Doobie Brothers, a fairly popular group that played in this area last spring. For their appearance last year, if my memory serves me correctly, the band got around \$3,500. Now with a big hit record behind them ("The Captain and Me"), the band is commanding about \$12,500 for a 90-minute appearance. The Doobie Brothers are no different from anyone else and I am just mentioning them because they happened to be handy in a corner of my mind. The costs of concerts has skyrocketed. Many bands now travel with their own stage acts and sound systems and many groups charter planes for a tour. And then there are the middle men, the promo men, managers, accountants and financial aides that travel with and feed off the bands. And now we have more. A little more than a year ago, record companies raised the list price of all their releases from \$4.98 to \$5.98 per record. Now records are going up to a \$6.98 list price. The record companies are smart. They are not making a wholesale price increase; across the board no, they are going to try to slip it in unnoticed. From now on, most of the big names in the record business will have their albums priced at \$6.98. The first example of this is the new Ringo album. Where will it all stop? I guess now is as good a time as ever to put your foot down. I'm not sure what avenue the consumer should take, or if you even care. That seems to be the reason for the price increase: the record companies know that they will sell just as many albums at \$6.98 as \$5.98. Apathy. Right?(!)

Bruce Micklus

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