

Buffalo's herd 'stampedes' into town

By CHERYL RUDERT

"Hot harpist" he's called. In fact, hot seems to follow Norton Buffalo around quite a bit — a tail-wagging adjective that has issued forth from the mouths of the like of Steve Miller, Paul Butterfield, Commander Cody and Michael Bloomfield.

Norton Buffalo is the emerging youngster on the blues scene — the celebrated prodigy who sports a set of electric lips, a rapid-firing jazz style and a potent group of musicians behind him called the Stampede.

This Friday and Saturday night Buffalo and his band will show off some of their stuff at the newly opened The Place. And if the raves following him can be taken as an indication, Eugene audiences are in for a mouth-puckering treat.

The Stampede plays a wide range of music — from country hoedown to jazz with even a bit of Dixieland thrown in for good measure. Besides Buffalo the band consists of Dave Shapiro, guitar; Philip Richardson, violin; "Doctor" Fred Jones, pedal steel; Kirk Harwood, drums, and Gary Crellar, bass.

A very intense and also very

young (the average age is 26) group of polished musicians, the Stampede has toured with Steve Miller and recorded one album, *Loving In The Valley of the Moon*, with Capitol Records.

Buffalo, whose harmonica is never relegated to the back-ground, was raised in Richmond, Calif. Save for a few trombone lessons he has had no formal music education and learned the fundamentals of the harmonica from his TV repairman father.

When he was in fifth grade he won a talent contest for a rendition of the "Marine's Hymn." But it wasn't until he was 13 that he heard his first blues.

A high school jazz band opened up new areas of repertoire and playing styles for him. In 1971 he branched out to country music, performing with a group called Tom Rose and his Country Moderns. Following two more years of starving with a rock band, Buffalo joined up with Colver bassist John McFee and tackled songwriting.

During this time Buffalo was developing a unique harmonica style that Steve Miller labels "absolutely brilliant." It consists of a blend of different instrument sounds, mimicked to perfection at the same time that he is running

off a mixture of clean notes with surprising rapidity.

Buffalo will frequently insert in his music an odd bossa nova beat or an instrumental Hungarian minor key back to back with a Chattanooga swing version of "Blues for Dixie." It's all personal style and Buffalo has it.

To hit notes faster without moving his harp, Buffalo developed the technique of curling his tongue lengthwise instead of pursing his lips or tongue-blocking notes.

It was after McFee went to England that a nucleus started to form around Buffalo. In 1975 he sat in on a couple of sets with Commander Cody's Lost Planet Airmen and got together a part of musicians for a group called The Moonlighters.

The public and press started to notice him during his tour of Europe with Commander Cody in 1976. When the group began to fizzle out Buffalo was picked up by Steve Miller and continued to rise to prominence.

Miller helped the Stampede sign a record contract and talked Buffalo up to the press. The rest is becoming history.

"What I'm doing different from most harp players," Buffalo exp-



The Norton Buffalo Stampede

lains, "is that I'm playing all the styles."

Playing with Norton Buffalo will be Wheatfield on Friday night and Keeter & Allison on Saturday. Two

shows are scheduled for 8:30 and 11:30 p.m. Tickets are \$4.50 and can be bought at the door or the Sun Shop, Everybody's or Bremen Town Records.

18th century music featured

By STEVE BELL

Prof. John Hamilton of the University music school is excited about the Early-Keyboard Festival at Beall concert hall, and well he should be.

Hamilton organized the festival to focus attention on not only the performers, but the instruments as well.

Both instruments and music featured during the course of the five-concert series are from time periods prior to the end of the 18th century.

Although the appeal of this concert series may be somewhat limited in an area with as much diversity in music as Eugene has, the first two concerts of the festival

have drawn good crowds.

Early keyboard musical importance in Eugene began with the arrival of the Ahrendt organ in Beall concert hall in 1972. The University placed the order for the organ in 1966 with the top builder in Europe. Beall hall now has what Hamilton calls, "one of the world's very, very great organs."

Shortly after the arrival of the Ahrendt organ, the Central Presbyterian Church, at 18th Avenue and Potter Streets, decided to get an organ of their own.

After consulting with music school administrators, members of the church chose John Brombaugh, an Ohio organ builder with one of the top reputations in the United States, to build their organ.

Brombaugh was eager to make a large organ, so he built his biggest organ to date, conceived in specific historical style.

Suddenly, Eugene had two of the best organs in the world across the street from each other.

Brombaugh was so impressed with the area that he moved his organ building firm to Eugene.

The succession of events created an increased focus on music in Eugene and led to the keyboard festival, which will now become an annual event.

Three performances remain on the festival schedule. Susan Tofte and James Morse will display the youthful involvement in early music that excited Hamilton when they perform Saturday at 8 p.m.

Morse is a graduate student at the music school. He will be performing on clavichord. Tofte is a former student and three-time Close Scholarship award winner at the music school.

Prof. Joan Benson will perform on fortepiano and clavichord Feb. 25 at 8 p.m. Benson is "one of America's finest clavichordists" according to Hamilton.

Closing the festival will be David Boe, dean of the Oberlin Conservatory of music, who will perform on the Central Presbyterian Church organ.

Although there will be an admission charge for the Boe's performance, the price has not yet been determined. The other concerts in the series are free.

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