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driving beat. His replacement is adequate, but it remains to be seen if they can recapture that spark.

Still, if a successful club band is measured by how much fun you can have dancing to their music, then The Xplorers are the best group in Eugene. They will be at Max's on the Sept. 19, and at Old Taylor's on Sept. 25 and 26 and again on Halloween weekend.

THE ROBERT CRAY BAND deserves the hype it receives as the top rhythm and blues band in the Northwest. Their sound is derived from the Chicago blues tradition of the 1950s and late 1960s, including traces of such notables as Wilson Pickett and Otis Redding. They are a highly polished band whose danceable style of music makes them one of the more popular groups in the area.

The key ingredients to their success are Curtis Salgado's shrill harp playing and energized vocal style, along with

Robert Cray's *smoooooth* guitar licks and crooning vocals. Throw in drums, saxophone, and bass and you have the makings of a very entertaining evening.

The Robert Cray Band will appear at The Place with blues singer Albert Collins on Sept. 17 and by themselves at B.J. Kelly's on Oct. 2 and 3.

THE SNEAKERS are Eugene's top "new wave" band, though they seem to be moving toward the pop side of that label as time progresses. They perform a mixture of their own material and 1960s pop standards. Their sound is cohesive — drums, bass, keyboards, guitar and lead vocals — without any one member dominating.

The Sneakers are a deceptively tight band, despite the way they weave around the stage in seeming chaos. Lead singer Don Williamson bops around with so much energy that you get tired just watching him. The Sneakers have become a Wednesday night fixture at B.J. Kelly's.

The PARTY KINGS are Eugene's consummate tavern band. They cater to crowds who love to drink lots of beer and dance the night away. Lead singer/harp player Bill Rhoades leads a tight group of musicians whose sound is influenced by Chicago-based harmonica bluesmen like Little Walter Jacobs and Junior Wells.

The band members, clad in T-shirts and faded jeans, look like they punch time clocks by day and play the blues by night. In fact, most of them do. But don't let their scruffy appearances deceive — they are a very professional sounding band that seldom disappoints. The Party Kings will be at Old Taylor's on Oct. 3 and 4, and again on Oct. 18 and 19.

When it comes to looking scruffy, though, NATIVE PULSE is in a category of its own: frazzled-looking characters who represent that side of Eugene's counter-culture which clings to the ideals of yesteryear hippiedom. They are free spirits that sometimes project an image of confusion on stage, which comes out in their music.

Native Pulse is billed as a reggae band. What they actually do is play washed-up versions of Bob Marley songs. But it's the closest thing you'll find to live reggae in Eugene, so they are worth the price of admission. If nothing else, they are fun to watch. They'll be at Old Taylor's on Oct. 10 and 11.

UPEPO defies any sort of musical classification. Just when you've pinpointed them as a new wave group, they throw Latin/Salsa rhythms into a set, or they'll come up with some tunes bordering on jazz-rock fusion. Whatever you label their music, it is certainly unique.

Upepo is a six-man band

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