

Note: Vance's last name was still Schmidt. He legally changed his name to Masters in 1977.

PAPA PLUTO HAS MUCH ORIGINALITY

As published in The Winnipeg Tribune, September 27, 1975
Written by: Silvio Dobri, Tribune Staff Writer

The climb up the musical ladder of success is long and arduous - the start alone can render musicians aphonic.

No one knows this better than musicians who pay their dues working pubs.

"Agents, owners and the crowd can all work against you and destroy any originality you may want to express," said Vance Schmidt, a 15-year veteran of the beverage room rout and drummer with Papa Pluto.

Guitarist Duncan Wilson picking up the thread of the conversation interjected: "Let's face it, agents are interested in their 10 per-cent and for them the prerequisite to get into the bar circuit is to play top 40 tunes."

The pressure to conform to the format also comes from pub owners and patrons.

"Some people just like to swig beer and listen to the same old hits, but hey are not really listening," said 26-year-old bassist Rick Shukster.

The unappreciative audience, said the musicians, tend to think of a band as something a little more animated than a juke box.

The four musicians who make up Papa Pluto are not given that sort of treatment these days. Their conversation about pub bands was based on their earlier experiences.

Papa Pluto has been doing original material from the outset, something not many Winnipeg bands do.

"Sometimes, even if they try, they'll get put down because that's not what brings in the bread for the agent, the pub owner, and them," said one of the four musicians.

Papa Pluto is on its fourth or fifth round of city pubs and the musicians are trying hard to get off the merry-go-round. The recent departure of former Guess Who member Kurt Winter may have set the band back for a while but they are determined to broaden their musical horizons.

"We've got a number of tapes circulating in and around Toronto and hope to get something there soon," said the 30-year-old Vance.

"The band did a tape for Columbia Records a short while ago but they felt we were not commercial enough, guess they're looking for another BTO (Backman-Turner Overdrive, whose members come mostly from Winnipeg).

"If we go to Toronto we'll try hard to get a single out, but at the moment we don't have any concrete commitments," said Duncan.

The musical growth pattern of the four musicians resembles that of every other rocker - starting out while still in high school, dropping out of school and gigging with nameless basement bands before joining Papa Pluto.

Drummer Vance Schmidt is one exception. Following his musical initiation in Winnipeg, he moved to England for a year with The Crescendos - a defunct city band - and returned here to cash in on the British rock invasion.

"After spending a year in England, arriving here was like part of a whole lot of other bands who came to North America. Some people really thought we were British," he said.

Rick, Duncan, and Vance have played together in a number of bands; they know each other's musical capabilities and have been able to work well together.

Guitarist Dave Inglis who joined the band two weeks ago said his musical experience expands a three year period. He replaced Kurt.

"I've played mostly with basement bands and have filled in for musicians who couldn't make a gig. It's nice to work with original material and I'm looking forward to learning and contributing to the band," said the 20-year-old guitarist.

Making a comfortable living is the musicians' main desire and as Vance explained it: "Playing music is something we all like and we don't really consider it work even though we spend a great deal of time on our music."

"It would be kind of nice to get our picture on the cover of the Rolling Stone," said Rick alluding to a hit song made popular by Dr. Hook. The others just laughed.