

Ronnie was his 'Rompin self' at Club 2000

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

Ronnie Hawkins and his Hawks played the Club 2000 on Sunday night. It was a party night, as always with the Hawk, and although it was not a sell-out crowd, the joint was jumping.

Local band Rebel Hill opened for Hawkins, playing a solid set of Southern rock. The Hawks (all his bands are named that, although the most famous Hawks left in 1964 to emerge as The Band in 1968), did several numbers by themselves, starting with The Band's "The Shape I'm In," with Terry Danko, Rick's younger brother by four years, playing bass and singing lead vocals. Terry doesn't look or sound too much like his brother, but he is extremely talented in his own right.

Hawkins opened with "Ain't that Just Like a Woman," making it clear that he was there to play for the crowd: "We play three styles: fast, slow, and medium." Throughout the night he took requests from dancers, flattering the women and insulting their partners: "I don't know what a pretty thing like that is doing with you - why you're ugly enough to be a Rolling Stone." The crowd loved it. He exhorted everyone to drink: "The more you drink the better I look, and girls, sometimes you gotta drink a lot."

Hawk sang most of his hits, including Odessa, Ruby Baby, Sick and Tired, Forty Days, Living the Life I Can't Afford, Baby Jean, Back to Louisiana, Mama Come Home, and the wonderful Down in the Alley, a blues tune he dedicated to John Lennon, who loved the single and helped promote it back in '70. He also did a Chuck Berry medley, as well some Muddy Waters tunes.

Although it was a terrific show, the real performance went on backstage, with the Hawk spinning his tales and doing what he does best - flirting, flattering, and making outrageous comments.

Ronnie turned 55 this month and calls himself "The Geritol Gypsy." His fans don't seem to think he's aged. Most of the audience made their way up to the dressing room during the break and after the show to meet the man, get his autograph, tell him how excited they were to meet him. One woman looked so thrilled it was a pleasure to watch her face. One man told him he was even better than when he'd seen him back in '68 and Hawkins replied, "that's what the young girls tell me and they're lying just like you."

Toronto rocker Paul James was in the audience, with a sore throat preventing him from jamming with the band, and messages came into the dressing room, including one from Halton Chairman Pete Pomeroy, who took Ronnie and his band out to the North Halton Country Club many years ago. Hawkins used to play at Club 2000 when it

was the Riviera, way back when The Band was still his Hawks. He couldn't remember exactly when he last played Halton Hills: "I can't remember time, it all runs together; as you know, I've got a little brain damage." But, he maintains, the Riviera was a "rockin' spot."

He was sorry not to see some friends from Georgetown, a Portuguese family he'd known back in the Le Coq D'Or days. "Frank was the cook there, and he worked for ten years alone before he could raise the money to send for his family."

Ronnie's big regret Sunday night was that Frank, Marie and their children John, Marie, and Armena were not there. "I was really hoping they'd be here - they were good people. If I'd known where they lived I would have visited their house."

The Hawkins mystique is irresistible; you are drawn along like so many of the famous before you, like Kris Kristofferson, who told someone to "follow Ronnie around with a tape recorder because he's got the most colorful language I've ever heard." Or Bob Dylan, who called him his idol. Or Gordon Lightfoot, or David Clayton Thomas, or Robbie Robertson, who would have done anything to get into his band. "Hire me," he was saying, "I will do anything. I'll walk on a tightrope, I'll be a roadie, I'll play an instrument, I'll write songs, I'll dance, I'll sing, I'll do anything." Fortunately, Ronnie did hire him.

Ronnie lays on the charm with

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Local country band Rebel Hill opened for Ronnie Hawkins at Club 2000 on Sunday. From the left, Larry

Pachlock, Craig Teeter, Nell Cotton and Gary Creary rocked before about 250 people. (Herald photo)

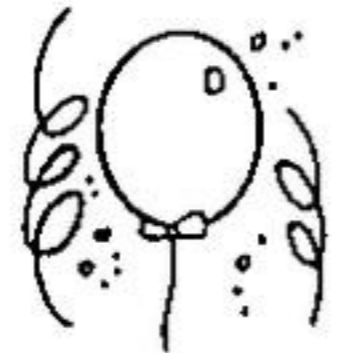
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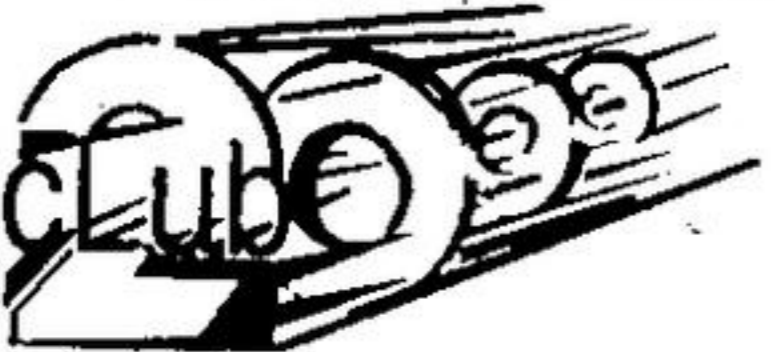
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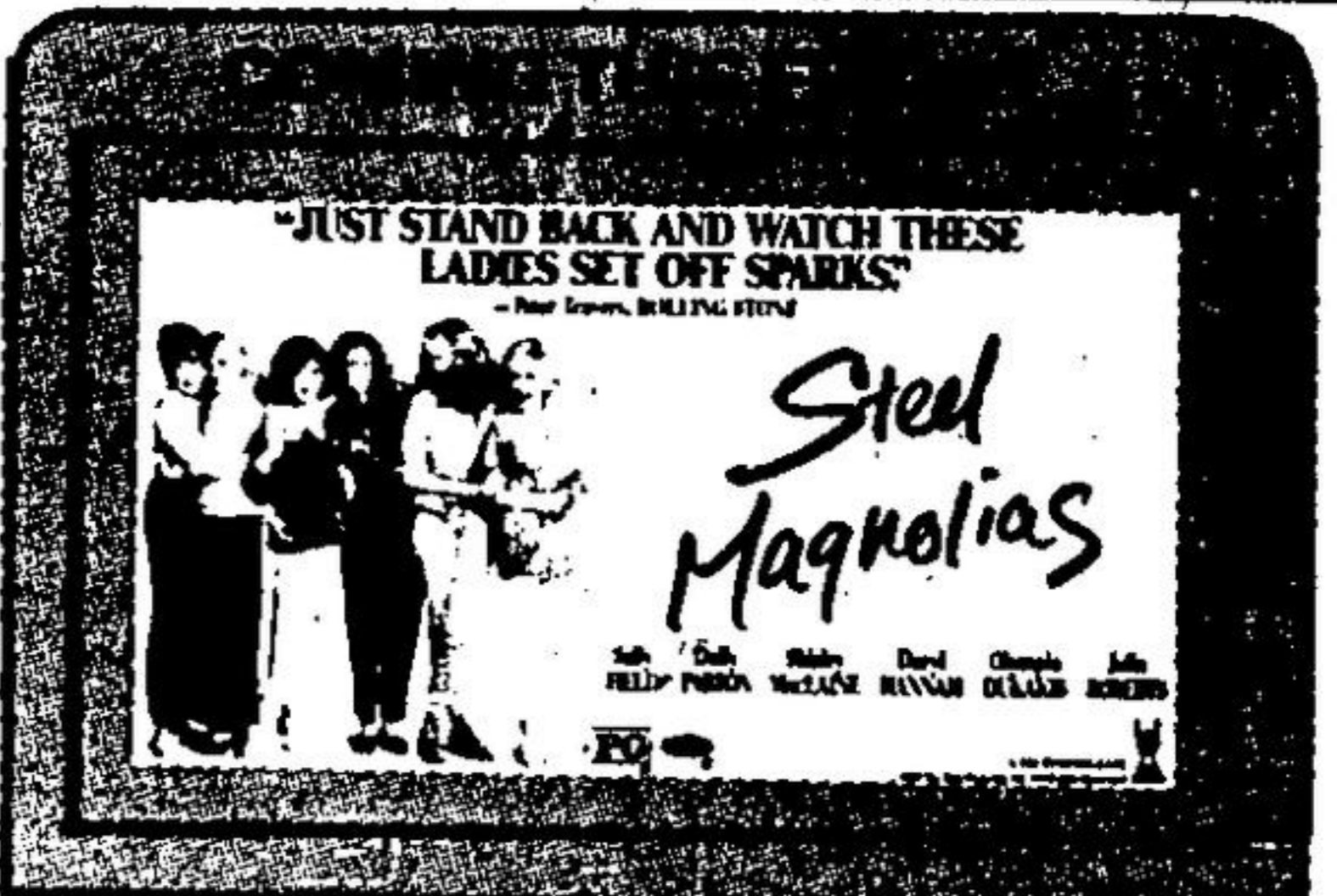
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