

arts insight



The new sound of Wagon Wheels

BRIAN FINCH and Kenny Henson, who are now playing to packed houses at the Wagon Wheels Hotel in Florida Road, are a more than welcome addition to the Durban live entertainment scene.

And judging by the hoards of people who pack the room every night from Tuesday to Saturday, there is obviously a dire need for something different, something professional and for something to save us from the monotony of discotheques.

It's quite hard to define the music played by Finch and Henson but it is something between funky country and solid hand-clapping folk.

Henson plays an incredible, laid back, easy electric guitar and he weaves notes of wonder through the mesmerising and powerful sounds of Brian Finch's rhythm guitar and voice.

They play music ranging from Arlo Guthrie to J. J. Cale in a very slick professional style as well as a number of their own compositions.

Having just completed a tour of South Africa and Rhodesia the duo had planned to go to

Cape Town but because of their popularity in Durban they decided to stay for about three months.

Their latest L.P., "Playgrounds in Paradise" has been very well received here and has just been released in Japan. It's a pity that they don't play more songs from the album but tend to stick to the more tried and tested pieces.

They obviously enjoy playing and their enthusiasm pervades the room to the extent that its party night every night.

It's advisable to go along early because on most nights there is only crowded standing room by about their second set. But even if you arrive late its well worth the hassle of being jostled by the crowds to get an earful of their music.

Another advantage is that the management of the Wagon Wheels does not ban denim and T-shirts although the dress is smart casual and there is no covert charge except at weekends.

Evelyn Holtzhausen

Finch, Henson at Nafma

BRIAN FINCH and Kenny Henson — both outstanding musicians in their own right — prove formidable as a duo. And their tight performance at the Natal Folk Music Association's Sunday night gig has raised new hopes for South Africa's sepeartist, but ever present, folk-rock sound.

by

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Henson the chance to expand and withdraw on its theme.

Finch's plaintive "Plans for Tomorrow" is by far his best song to date and without hesitation should be released as a single.

But it is Henson who takes the focus more often than not. His total concentration is mesmerising; Nothing can disturb the inner soul, nor the subliminal dedication to the sound. And that's what matters.

Neither of these performers are amateurs. They cut their musical teeth in the days when music was heavy, and in an era yet to be equalled in South Africa. Kenny, with Freedom's Children and Abstract Truth; Brian, on the stages of a hyper-critical, heavy Durban acoustic-folk-country rock scene in the days when audiences were as likely to hurl beer bottles as compliments.

Sunday night's audience was the best Nafma has had for some time — and Henson and Finch highlighted the high quality of music in among the otherwise somewhat staid fiddlers and guitarists.

They open at the Ocean View Hotel tonight.

The appearance of Henson's gleaming cream electric lead in among the fiddlers and classical string guitarists may have stretched the ethic of folk music somewhat — but then South Africa has not yet produced the tightly meshed folk societies of traditional British clubs where anything electric is akin to the plague.

With the axe, he proved one of the facts of the electric muse — the acoustic and electric, plus echo, plus reverb, plus wah which can, and does, make the sort of music folk-rock is all about.

Henson's solo work is impeccable and drew gasps of incredulity as his fingers searched and probed, drawing magic from the music of Brian Finch. In fact, Kenny is the catalyst — the human element that transforms notes into solid webs of music perfection.

Music, mostly, was from the Finch-Henson joint album "Playgrounds in Paradise" due for release on May 13.

Finch has extended the sort of easyflowing folk-rock that made his first solo album "Bringing Back The Good Times" one of the best local productions yet. His new songs — like "The Plainsman" — expand on his "Song to Jeffreys" theme, hammering home his poetry on man's environment and its destruction. It is a long song, which gives

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