

As the man said, Allen-Ward trio is un-hip...and it's also unfinished

By RALPH THOMAS
Star staff writer

"We're probably the most un-hip group they've had in this place in a long time," Robin Ward of the Allen-Ward Trio told the 17 listeners present for the last set at the Penny Farthing last night.

Robin wasn't telling a lie. At a time when most folk groups have a year or more of experience with electric guitars and the big beat under their belts, the Allen-Ward is just starting out in fact, according to Ward, the group's first public appearance with electronic amplification was last night's.

As a result, the Allen-Ward spent most of its time working out problems on stage that other groups solved long ago, not just little things such as how to adjust amplifiers, but bigger musical problems as well—problems such as getting more than just added noise from electric guitars.

Add to this the group's current task of blending in the voice of a new girl singer, Donna Marie DeHoll, with regulars Ward and Craig Allen and everything last night sounded embryonic and unfinished.

Only two songs—"Oh, Babe, Ain't No Lie" and "The Other Side" (both comfortable old folk tunes)—came off particularly well. Others such as "Spin, Spin" (Gordie Lightfoot's tune) and "Nowadays" (written by Allen) showed promise of things to come, but little else.

The Allen-Ward promises interesting harmonies, interesting rhythms and song treatments. But frankly, none of their promises, if realized, would mean anything especially new. Even the Beatles are more adventuresome.

★ ★ ★

Jon Mitchell, at the Riverboat, is something else again.

Let's set aside her physical beauty. She's one of the most beautiful girls in folk music—a tall, willowy girl with long, golden hair and a striking, finely-chiselled face. But let's set that aside.

Jon is at once a writer of extremely expressive and delightfully lyrical songs and a singer of extraordinary range of mood and loveliness of voice.

At the moment, she's perhaps more successful as a song writer. A host of other folk singers and even some country and western stars are doing her songs. Requests for them now average 400 a month.

Her songs are poetry—full

AT THE CLUBS

of poignantly evocative images (images from nature, the prairies and the open spaces, as well as the dark side of cities), full of longing (for sunnier places, sunnier faces and sunnier seasons), full of loss of love, full of love.

As a singer, she's better known in the U.S.—not because, as a Canadian from Saskatchewan, she wouldn't rather work here, but because the U.S. is where the work has always been. This is her only Canadian appearance until next August.

It's a pity, because as a performer she is an enchantress. She not only sings with beauty, feeling and style, she weaves spells. Every one of her songs last night was followed by a

sighing silence before the burst of applause.

She shouldn't be missed. She closes Sunday night.

★ ★ ★

Something Toronto still lacks is a real, modern dance club—one where, in addition to shattering music, you get everything from blinding lights to movies all at the same time.

No, the Warp 7, which opened last night billed as Toronto's "avant garde" club, doesn't fill that need.

Compared to what can be found even in Buffalo, this new club at the corner of Huron and Harbord Sts. is terribly conservative. True, the walls are covered with some interesting black and white images—mainly one borrowed from Leonardo Da Vinci. But, there are no flashing lights—nothing, in fact that couldn't be found in just about any Toronto dance club.

It simply doesn't live up to its name. "Warp 7" is time space scientific jargon. I'm told at "Warp 7" the body is supposed to disintegrate.

Last night while I was there anyway, not only did no one disintegrate, but the band (The Big Town Boys) couldn't even get anyone to dance.

A new Olivier triumph in 'Dance of Death'

LONDON (Reuters)—Sir Laurence Olivier scored another triumph last night in a brilliant new production of Strindberg's "The Dance of Death," which entered the National Theatre company's repertory at the Old Vic.

Appearing for the first time in a major role since he created his historic Othello in 1964, Olivier was given a great ovation at the end of his superb performance as the self-centred, sadistic artillery captain who is the tormentor in the Swedish author's most hopeless drama of the sex war.

Once more Olivier showed his amazing gift of characterization in presenting a polished portrait of an aging soldier, which carried complete conviction in appearance, voice and bearing down to the smallest military mannerism.

He brought out with telling subtlety the psychological maelstrom of a sadistic character briefly softened by the fear of death. At the end his fatal apopleptic fit was a masterpiece of acting.

Opposite him Geraldine McEwan as the wife, showed herself a worthy partner in demonic matri-

monial hatred, revealing an hitherto unknown dramatic power, notably in her last horrendous outburst of loathing; and Robert Stephens played with considerable finesse the man she seduces and tries to use as a weapon against her husband.

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