

# Rock fans warm up to band's White Hot

## Hot Licks

By Graham Hicks



When **Red Rider's** first album turned up last fall, newspaper rock critics were skeptical.

The whole project reeked of hype.

Record companies decide each month which albums they are going to push. The company's promo men bug radio programmers to play the album, record stores are urged to set up posters and displays, provided by the record companies.

Suddenly an unknown Toronto band called **Red Rider** was getting the royal treatment from its record company, Capitol Records. Capitol was so determined to make the album, *Don't Fight It*, a success that prizes were promised to salesmen who did the best job.

A rumor was Capitol had spent so much money on the album — about \$200,000 for making it in Los Angeles, plus promotion costs — that it would have to sell 200,000 copies just to break even as an investment.

In Canada, if an album goes gold (50,000 copies), record companies break out the champagne.

A few months later, and guess who's having the last laugh? **White Hot**, the single from the album, has proved to be a big hit. *Don't Fight It*, the title cut, is another song that radio stations play.

**White Hot** was a funny song. It grew on you. By the fifth or sixth listen, you loved it. You, and 50,000 other Canadians went out and bought the album.

I was in San Francisco on holiday last week. And what did I hear on the radio all the time? **White Hot**. *Don't Fight It* is selling well in the U.S., climbing up record charts across the country.

"Hype is being damned if you do, damned if you don't," said the band's bassist **Jeff Jones** over coffee earlier this week when **Red Rider** was in town opening for **April Wine** at the Coliseum. "You don't get recognition if no one hears you. If you do get heard, people say it's all hype."

"No promotional push will put a band over the top," pipes in the band's drummer **Rob Baker**. "If people don't like the songs, they won't buy the album."

"We were glad to get the support," said guitarist **Tom Cochrane**, the band's songwriter and vocalist with that

soft, husky, distinctive voice. "Capitol releases two records a week around the world. Eighty per cent of them get lost in Calcutta."

**Red Rider** isn't an overnight success. The current group is the fortunate teaming of **Tom Cochrane** and **Jeff Jones**, two years ago, with the band's three original members, who've played together since 1976.

Cochrane had spent eight months in Los Angeles, peddling his songs, when he came back to Toronto. "I saw **Red Rider** in the **El Mocambo** in Toronto. They sounded so much better than any Los Angeles groups."

As it happened, the original guitarist was leaving the band. Cochrane, with his songs and his voice, came onboard. A few months later, **Jones** joined.

A year's worth of bars later, an old musician pal of Cochrane's came to hear the band. He was Capitol's head of talent acquisition in Canada, **Dean Cameron**.

Connections do help. **Cameron** loved the band. He made it his goal to give **Red Rider** a good recording contract.

Here's how connections work. **Cameron** has a good reputation with his Capitol's American counterparts. He convinced them to PUSH **April Wine**, a successful project. He was instrumental in bringing **Rush's** small Canadian record label, **Anthem**, into partnership with Capitol. In short, he delivered the goods.

**Red Rider** was given a chance in the U.S., something which most Canadian bands don't get.

The songs were good. The promotion exposed radio listeners to the songs. The album's selling well. And everybody, especially **Red Rider**, is feeling terrific.

"We were close to breaking up," said **Baker**. "We couldn't make ends meet before we got our record contract." Added **Cochrane**: "we were tired of playing in bars in front of 15 drunks."

Instead of breaking up, **Red Rider** is touring with bands like **April Wine**, getting electric shocks of recognition when they break into the haunting guitar opening of **White Hot**.

A tour with **Prism** in Eastern Canada takes place right after the **April Wine** dates end. Come June, the band's off to tour the States, possibly with **Jefferson Starship**.

SAVE YOUR PENNIES to see two fine bands coming to Edmonton soon. The great English classically-oriented band **Genesis** launches its North American tour here Saturday in **Northlands Coliseum**.

A week today, **ZZ Top**, the Texas trio that took two years off and came storming back with an excellent hard rock boogie album, **Deguello**, are in the Coliseum.

Meanwhile, the **Sportsworld Roller Skating Centre** down in the south end at 8915 51st Ave. is having an all-night party Friday. From midnight to 7 a.m. hard rock band **Pretty Rough** alternates with new wave-pop band **Slash and the Bleeding Hearts**. Tickets are \$4.75, with skating for the party starting at 7 p.m.