



Foreigner's Mick Jones:
a white Ike Turner?

*Foreigner; Trooper,
C.N.E. Stadium, Toronto*

It may have been because this was the band's first-ever Canadian performance, or (and this is more likely) simply that they've grown extensively as a "live" act during the past year's time. Whatever the cause, the effect was estimable: Foreigner rocked with enough power, grace and character to confirm their firm place among the top rock bands of their era.

While it would be foolish to deny the band's debt toward such earlier acts as Free and Bad Company, Foreigner has plenty to be said in its own behalf. Six strong, the group exhibits much more versatility than its antecedents, with enough doubling on instruments to give the band's music considerable and changing color. Ian McDonald helped considerably in that respect, moving with equal fluency from guitar to organ to reeds and woodwinds. A flute interlude on "Starrider" was particularly breathtaking,

though McDonald's work was, like that of his fellow players, solid and imaginative throughout the set.

Lou Gramm's lead vocal style owes much to Paul Rodgers, but his granite-edged belting is presented with quarts less sweat than Rodgers'; he was grinning through most of the set. If Bad Company's singer (or for that matter, any of the rest of them) ever grinned, it'd probably shock their most avid fan. The good-time attitude seems to permeate Foreigner, with guitarist-pianist Mick Jones saving most of the anguished grimacing for himself. For a couple of numbers, including "Headknocker" from the band's first album, Gramm pounded a second set of drums, adding more visually than to the group's sound.

Jones is clearly a leader figure in the manner of Ike Turner. Though he stayed for the most part to the side of the stage, and left most of the leaping about to Gramm, there was somehow little doubt as to who was ultimately pulling (not to mention plucking) the strings. In a rare display of his vocal talents,

Jones sang — quite capably — the opening verse of "Woman Oh Woman."

Gramm paid attention to the audience: spotting a banner reading "Buffalo, N.Y. says Hello," he dedicated "Double Vision" to the long-trekking fans; noting the relatively young age of the crowd, he later taunted the sedentary group, "Did Mom and Dad tell you to stay in your seats?" They took the challenge; many remained on their feet for the rest of the performance.

Trooper, based in British Columbia, opened the show. Though Toronto is reportedly the last area of Canada that the band has to conquer, the audience was only slightly less than hysterical through most of their too-brief set. Lead singer Ra (that's the way he spells it, folks) McGuire sports a considerably clean-cut personality; in school, he'd be a likely candidate for class president. On stage, he talked a bit more than most American audiences would probably stand for, though what he had to say—stories behind

the songs, for instance—was more articulate than what many rock musicians pass off as patter. Guitarist Brian Smith wore a Mick Jagger golfing cap and played thick Keith Richards chords; what more could be asked of him? Probably the band's strongest number was the lovely ballad, "Pretty Lady," with a classic, "Whiter Shade of Pale" organ solo by Frank Ludwig.

Though their references are good—they are produced by Randy Bachman—and their performances impeccable, Trooper have yet to make much of an impression Stateside. It's a damned pity, and about time somebody did something to correct that.

Todd Everett

*Paul Winter Consort, St. John's
College, Santa Fe, New Mexico*

Paul Winter's ga-ga fascination with nature is more than a bit reminiscent of what happens after several encounters with a high-quality drug. It's not that perspective is lost, or even "wrong." But it's certainly altered, and in a way that isn't necessarily passed on to those who aren't experiencing the same sort of stimulation. Winter talks about wolves and whales the way some people speak of John Kennedy; others, of a cherry 1956 T-bird; others of *Star Wars*; and others, of God. In a discourse about whales, Winter alludes to "our arrogance about being the most intelligent creature on Earth." Winter's contention is that, since whales have existed longer than we have, and in apparent harmony, they have something to teach us. He doesn't invite debate.

For, despite all of this preaching, Winter is a musician, and this appearance was not a lecture, but a concert. Who says the two can't be combined?

Not Winter, certainly. He and his band play some fine music, a sort of hippie cocktail jazz with rock undercurrents. A vocalist, Susan Osborne, adds a strong Tracy Nelson earthmother wail that's most affecting — though a song about Indians, containing every extant cliché about the race, and, though called "Dakota Lullabye," is sung in English, may have been met with some amusement by the audience at this particular concert; many of them, Indians themselves, knew considerably more than the doubtless well-intentioned Osborne or the fellow who wrote the song. The singer was on far more solid ground with a moving accappella reading of Laura Nyro's "And When I Die."

Among the other musicians in this edition of the Consort, perhaps the most potential was shown by guitarist-singer Jim Scott. With a distinctive style on his acoustic instrument, a strong Pete Townshend attack, and a folkie Jesse Colin Young voice, Scott is clearly destined for bigger things. In the context of the band, he adds teen appeal and likely keeps the girls interested.

Other members of the group seen at this show, a benefit for a local solar energy outfit, were cellist David Darling; drummer Michael Blair; oboist Nancy Rumble; bassist John Guth; and Winter, on various reeds and woodwind instruments.

Most of the material was written by Winter, in collaboration with members of the group and various animals, whose calls he appropriated ("a wolf howls for the same reason that we chant Om or sing hymns — to assert solidarity." Hm?). Toward the end of the show, he brought a live wolf, named Slick, on stage and encouraged members of the audience to howl along. Though large numbers of spectators bellowed impressively, Slick refused to utter a sound. Everybody wants to be a music critic. Maybe wolves are smarter than we are.

Del Porter