

Winning band contests can be exciting and frustrating

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Bands who enter influential band competitions think that winning them is exciting. Three local bands who won this year call their experiences interesting — and somewhat frustrating.

Tim Patelan, bassist for the hard rock band Something Wild, knew that Russia was "not exactly the safest place to go." He kept that in mind when his band won the "Stiff: Rocks to Russia" band competition, but he never imagined the kind of violence he witnessed.

During their fall trip, they were caught in the middle of the violent confrontation between Boris Yeltsin and members of the Par-

liament holed up in the White House. Just prior to that, Something Wild finished their three gigs and were preparing to go sightseeing. Instead they hid in their hotel and watched the White House burn.

Eventually, the Ann Arbor-based band escaped to the airport with their non-English speaking bodyguards.

Back at home, the roots rock band Red C won the "Jim Beam Country Caravan Talent Search" in Nashville. Significantly less adventurous than Something Wild's trip, their prize was a showcase for country music recording executives. There was one problem.

Red C isn't exactly country.

Country radio stations agree and say Red C's material isn't appropriate for them, according to manager Billy Brandt.

"Marketing has become more important than being good," said lead vocalist Susan Calloway. "That's wrong. People are so caught up with marketing . . . that they're throwing the baby out with the bath water."

If Red C is frustrated with the country label, then why enter a country contest anyway?

"I think when there's an opportunity to get exposure, you take them regardless of what it might be titled as," guitarist Steve Wood said after a short pause.

"The important thing is that the

name Red C is being passed around. People are wondering what we are."

This isn't the first time they've encountered the problem. Past winners of country awards, Red C won the Best Band, Vocalist and Local Record and Talent Discovery Wider Recognition in the country category at last week's 1993 Detroit Music Awards.

"We don't mind being called a rock band with a country influence. But when we win a straight forward country award, it sends our heads," Wood said in a telephone conversation prior to the music awards.

Prior to Red C's trip to Nashville, Ed Lansing's The Verve Pipe jetted off to Japan to play at

the "MusicQuest" showcase after winning the "Soundcheck — The Ticketmaster Yamaha Music Showcase" in Dallas, Texas. When asked about the contest, The Verve Pipe's drummer Donnie Brown said he's frustrated that stories written about the band have focused on the trip.

He prefers to discuss "the songs. I'd rather have five quotes about five different songs . . . not just a couple paragraphs copied from a press release."

Some attention isn't all bad. Something Wild received immense press for "living a whole day in hell" as lead singer Tim Furlong describes it. Associated Press, ABC and MTV News as

well as newspapers worldwide were interested in Something Wild.

"All these other bands were saying we were so lucky. We didn't feel lucky when the bullets went whizzing by our heads," Furlong said with a laugh.

Although they have a tale they can tell for years, Furlong expressed something that the other bands feel as well: "We're good enough to win a contest but we're not good enough to get (record) deals," Furlong said.

Red C's next show will be Friday, Feb. 4, with The Verve Pipe at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6665.

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