

'Rider' begins the climb with \$300,000 Capitol support

By JOHN GRIFFIN
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Red Rider is not exactly a household name in local rock circles.

But if the band, its manager and the powers that be at Capitol Records have their way, this five-man Toronto based rock 'n' roll consortium and its debut album, *Don't Fight It*, will be the biggest thing to hit the industry since the Beatles.

Capitol is investing \$300,000 in promotion to help put Red Rider over the top and in return the band is working, and working hard.

Its massive three-month cross-Canada tour as the opening act for April Wine, the veteran Montreal rockers, brought Red Rider to town this week. For hazy contractual reasons the band could not play with April Wine at the Forum last night and settled, instead, for a stint at the more intimate Pretzel.

It was a move the band appreciated after playing the arenas and cavernous cow palaces across the country.

According to chief singer songwriter Tom Cochrane: "We missed an encore at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto because the kids were so far away by the time we heard the applause that we'd already showered and changed."

Joined forces

The nucleus of Red Rider was formed in Toronto back in 1976 when Peter Boynton (guitarist, singer), Ken Greer and Rob Baker (drummer), joined forces for a series of performances that included opening for Pure Prairie League and trip to England at the peak of the Punk explosion on a bill with Eddie and the Hot Rods.

But it was with the arrival of Tom Cochrane as principal singer and songwriter in late 1977 that the band started to define its image as a mainstream rock outfit. Bass player Jeff Jones

joined shortly thereafter and Red Rider's lineup and batting order was complete.

Hometown Toronto proved a stifling start to the group's career.

Cochrane recalls: "We were caught in a Catch 22 situation.

"We wanted to do our own material, but you can't work the clubs in Toronto unless you play nothing but cover versions of Top Forty songs.

"Yet you have no future in the recording industry unless you have original material. We decided to remain true to ourselves and our vision. Fortunately, Capitol came and bailed us out."

A and R personnel at Capitol heard a Red Rider demo tape and were sufficiently impressed to sign the band and give it the financial breathing space needed to work on an album.

The result is a top-flight first effort called *Don't Fight It* that successfully combines intelligent lyrics and progressive musicianship with an instantly identifiable and commercial sound.

'A terrific place'

Recorded in Los Angeles and Toronto, *"Don't Fight It"* reflects what the band considers very different studio atmospheres.

Bassist Jeff Jones found California "a terrific place to work. The attitude is very laid back but the professionalism is all there. Some of the best musicians in the world were around when we recorded but they were all very helpful and friendly. No "star" turns at all. By comparison, the Toronto studios were very efficient but some of the gadgetry and players were missing."

Still, the two-city influence and cross-country recording hops are paying dividends. The album and a single "White Hot" are selling very well in both the States and Canada and the band and manager Doug Rover are convinced that steady touring will justify Capitol's financial leap of faith.



The 'Red Rider' group includes (left to right) Jeff Jones, Peter Boynton, Tom Cochrane, Rob Baker and Ken Greer