

10,000 Maniacs To Return For Concert At Palace

By MARK GENOVESE
LOS ANGELES — Laundry
It has been more than 8½ straight weeks on the road and Jamestown's 10,000 Maniacs were beginning to measure time in terms of the number of stops they had made to wash their clothes, laughed guitarist John C. Lombardo.

It was noon Pacific Coast Time and band members had spent the day before driving south from two successful performances in the San Francisco area. Lombardo said the band was to play its next two dates in sunny Los Angeles and then head back to the snowy East and to a homecoming at the Palace Civic Center at 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 28. The Maniacs are on tour to promote their first album on Elektra records, *The Wishing Chair*.

Other group members from Jamestown are: Robert Buck, guitar; Dennis Drew, keyboards; Steven Gustafson, bass; and Natalie Merchant, vocals. Drummer Jerome Augustyniak is from Sloan, near Buffalo.

A lot of tedious travel goes into promoting an album, but "We're in pretty good spirits," Lombardo noted. He said the band is making this entire trip by van. Before they left in October, the band purchased a pair of passenger vans and "We've already put about 20,000 miles on them," he said.

One can see the lines on a marked-up road map tracing their path: Boulder, Colo.; Laramie, Wyo.; New Orleans, Athens and Savannah, Ga.; Tuscaloosa, Ala.; Austin, Dallas; Phoenix; Kansas City; St. Louis; Omaha; Chicago; Iowa; and Minnesota. The Maniacs toured Europe this summer.

In October, the band performed in the East for three weeks on their own, then toured the Midwest for four weeks opening for a highly acclaimed band — R.E.M. — and have been touring the West on their own for the past 2½ weeks. A roadie and a soundman are being taken along on this tour. Their manager joined them for the California dates.

The Maniacs had never been in Los Angeles before, but there was a lot of interest in the band when they arrived.



10,000 MANIACS The Wishing Chair

10,000 Maniacs' album, 'The Wishing Chair

pick of the weekend.

In a band's early days, when it does not have the radio play to back its record up, it relies upon the music press to give the fans a good recommendation, he said. This has been no problem for the Maniacs, in that they have been receiving extremely good reviews from most major national music publications in the past few months.

Of the band's success in Europe, Lombardo said, "I think it helped us get signed." He said they caught on right away with the European music press. Many of both American and European music reviewers have been comparing the Maniacs to recent bands from the Athens, Ga. area, such as R.E.M., Let's Active, and Guadalupe and Diary.

During their dates in San Francisco and Los Angeles, band members were glad to hear they had sold 1,000 records in California so far, he said.

Lombardo said the Maniacs had already been playing the top clubs in some cities, but in other areas they are now playing in venues they had not been able to before.

Reviews from the Los Angeles press have been great, he said. The *Los Angeles Times* published a major piece on them in their weekend edition two weeks ago, he said. In fact, the Maniacs were that paper's entertainment

Lombardo said because a band's sound is difficult to put into words, the music press often finds itself having to describe new bands in terms of other, established groups. "Our sound may not be the same — some of the bands tend to use more synthesizers, others are more acoustic — but I think the spirit of the bands is similar," he said.

Members of the these groups grew up during the same era of rock history and were "school'd" on the same kinds of bands, he said.

Record companies have a different attitude toward promoting bands than they did in the 1960s and 1970s, he said. Instead of trying to promote the band from the start, companies today have a wait-and-see attitude. This means the bands must prove themselves, he said.

"But Elektra is extremely surprised and happy" as songs from *The Wishing Chair* are starting to get radio play in commercial markets, he said.

Elektra has been supporting the band right along by allowing them to have some freedom, he said. "This is why why we signed with them," Lombardo said. He said Elektra allowed them mutual consent in choosing a producer, selecting cover art, and developing the sound of the songs.

Lombardo said that most producers "have strictly a technical point of view," and don't look at the music as art. Joe Boyd, producer of *The Wishing Chair*, is not like that, Lombardo said; he is a man of many talents. He said Boyd was more intellectual and acted more like an observer for the project.

Reviewers on either side of the Atlantic are curious about the band's origins. "They found it unusual that the band's members were from the same small town," he said. Cities that have been spawning many new bands, like Austin and Athens, are university centers, and people tend to gravitate toward them, he said. As a result, many members of these bands are not actually from these areas, he said.

The Dec. 20 Jamestown show may be longer than the other dates, Lombardo said. Band members intend to make it as good as all their other performances, he said.

In addition, fans of all ages are to be allowed into the show, Lombardo said. This had been a problem in the past in trying to build an audience. A band's audience is limited to those 21 and older when it is playing in a bar. Many clubs are holding "all-ages" shows that

permit younger fans to attend.

He noted that in Europe, the younger fans are exposed to newer bands more frequently because developments in music tend to occur more quickly over there than they do in the United States. The music scene is more innovative there and commercial radio stations readily play new music.

"Some groups that are popular here can't make it over there," he said.

On the other hand, it takes longer to break into the American market because there is a "mind set," he said. He noted that 14 and 15-year-olds are still listening to the same bands he did when he was that age. For example, the Doors — a group that broke up in 1971 — is still the third-best selling band on the Elektra label, he said.

While on the road, the Maniacs are thinking of new songs for their second album, although they do not have the time to work them out. One thing they hope to capture on their next record is the excitement generated by performing before an audience.

He noted some bands have spent most of their early years playing clubs while others have worked more in the studio. This is why a band's studio sound can be much different from that of its live performances. Some others, after they perfect their studio sound, can go out in concert and sound just like their albums, he said.

After this tour finishes, the band and the record company are making plans to head back to Europe, he said. On the tour will be return dates to West Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands and possibly first-time stops in France and Switzerland.

And they can count the weeks by when they do their laundry again.

RECORD REVIEW