

Maniacs Continue Climb Up Chart

By TIM O'BRIEN

The "Peace Train" is gathering speed.

Jamestown's 10,000 Maniacs' second major-label album continues to record large increases in sales and airplay.

The album, *In My Tribe*, which includes the "Peace Train" single, climbed 35 notches on the *Billboard* top 200 albums chart, from a ranking of 190 two weeks ago to number 155 last week.

Band manager Peter Leak said the record's rise slows this week, as it lands at number 152.

The 12-song collection is still pegged with a bullet, which marks large increases in sales over the previous week, he said. A bullet also means the album is expected to continue rising.

When the album jumped from 190 to 155 on the chart, Leak said, even officials at Elektra Records were startled.

"No one kind of expected that big jump at the record company," he said.

Band members, too, have been delighted to see their name on the charts, bassist Steven Gustafson told *The Post-Journal* Friday in a telephone interview before taking the stage at a Dallas, Texas, nightclub.

"That's pretty exciting. When I think about it, I guess it's always been a

dream of mine," he said. "We're real excited about it. It's taken a lot of work."

Four of the band's members have been playing together for almost seven years, he noted, and all five have performed as 10,000 Maniacs for six years.

When band members first heard they had made the *Billboard* chart, he said, "we did a few high fives and a little sigh of relief."

The album has been selling about 1,000 copies each day, he said, and U.S. sales total 60,000 so far. That figure is double the 30,000 copies of their first album, *The Wishing Chair*, sold in the United States.

When an album makes a large rise on the *Billboard* chart, Leak said, it means more work must be done to keep the momentum going.

That may be helped by the release of the second single from the album, "Don't Talk." The song follows "Peace Train" and is the first single to be written by band members.

"Peace Train" is a remake of a Cat Stevens' song, while "Don't Talk" was co-written by keyboard player Dennis Drew and lead singer and lyricist Natalie Merchant. The song depicts a woman's decision to confront her love's

drinking problem.

A video for the second single was filmed live while the band performed in Paris, Leak said. The video, less expensive and technical than the "Peace Train" film, is being edited, he said.

The band members' concerts in Europe went over so well, he said, they have been invited back both to England and Switzerland.

"It was a very successful tour," Leak said. "The English music papers completely flipped out."

In one review, the band was called "one of America's best exports," he said.

While the Maniacs have been asked back to England in November, he said, they may continue touring the United States instead to further boost sales of their album and keep it on the chart.

Billboard isn't the only rock-music listing the Maniacs find themselves on.

In its most recent edition, the music magazine *Rolling Stone* lists *In My Tribe* as the third most popular album among college audiences, judging by airplay on college radio stations.

"We go over real well in colleges," Gustafson said.

While the band is hoping to reach the top spot on the listing, he noted, "we've got some stiff competition now with R.E.M. coming up (with a new album)."

The Maniacs will be opening for R.E.M., a popular band whose lead singer shared vocals on one of *In My Tribe*'s songs, starting this week.

The two bands' performances Oct. 6 and 7 in New York's Radio City Music Hall have already sold out, Gustafson said.

The Maniacs' concerts with R.E.M. should bring even more attention to the five local musicians, Leak noted.

The band members have been playing concerts by themselves from London to Paris and from Los Angeles to Dallas.

While in England, Gustafson said, "we got a 'best pop record of the year' from *Melody Maker*."

The band's compact disc of *In My Tribe* also was named one of the best-sounding ones by *Cashbox* magazine, he added.

The band, which has been appearing in concerts since mid-August, will continue touring through November.