

The Drummer

Jerry Augustyniak's family has always found him to be all right.

This man has a swarm of relatives, who crowd around him like the workers in a beehive. They are his inspiration, his believers.

This man is the true childlike inspiration of the band.

On stage, he is as light as a monkey, scrambling among his drum set, as if he hopes the music might never end.

Midway through the show he throws his stick up in the air — and catches it.

"I just threw it up because I couldn't hang onto the things," he says after the performance. "It hit some lights and came down.

"That was the closest to jockdom I'll get."

Augustyniak is a small man, with a shaved head. Not too long ago, he always wore a stocking cap or a toupe over his balding spot.

No more. Now he shows the skin with a forceful pride.

Someone comes up to him with a T-shirt with the Maniacs pictures on it.

His cousin, standing next to him, admires the shirt. "Where do you get that," he asks Augustyniak. "I'd like to get one," he says.

"I don't know," his cousin replies. "I'd like to get one too."

He points to his own picture and laughs. "I look like ectoplasm with glasses."

He hugs his cousin. "Most of my nephews and nieces are taller than me and better looking, but I don't care — because I'm a rock star."

It is not stardom, however, which beckons him. "I love to play if there's anybody out there who will hear me."

This, for him, is a love, not money or a job.

"I figure if I were to get a real job, I'd probably take all my money and go to school for auto mechanics," he says.

With the money he has made from the band, Augustyniak has bought a '65 Ford. "It's like 23 years old and it's the most ridiculously simple thing," he explains. On the night of the concert at Darien Lake, it overheated on the way up.

Augustyniak is the only Maniac who doesn't live in Jamestown.

He has lived all his life in Buffalo; he lives there still, in his family's house.

They live near the east side railroad terminal, he says, a beautiful building that is now a lonely place.

"I go there and just imagine guys coming home from World War II — guys dressed like Clark Kent — now they use it once in a blue moon for polka dances.

It was Augustyniak that wrote the music for the song *My Sister Rose*, a swinging polka-like tune for which Ms. Merchant wrote lyrics about a sister's wedding day.

Before too much talking at the after-concert party, Augustyniak excuses himself. Most of his family is there, he says. He wants to talk to them.

His is one of the last bright images of the concert. After the first encore he comes up to the microphone and sends a thank-you and a wave to his family.

And the lights fade.

New Maniac Songs To Debut Tonight

By TIA SWANSON

Tonight 10,000 Maniacs concert-goers should expect blue and green, dark and light, stories and songs.

Members of the band describe *In My Tribe* as sky blue and light.

And now they're talking about their new album, one that's going to be about the color green in tone, darker in mood and full of stories.

Tonight will mark the debut of some new 10,000 Maniacs songs, ones that will be on their third major-label album they'll record in November.

After a year of promoting *In My Tribe* the band seems ready to tackle the new fare, and excited about what it holds.

"This one is extremely allegorical," says singer/lyricist Natalie Merchant.

The message, she said is "going to be

masked by the story more than ever before."

But, says she, "I think there's a lot of serious content."

Ms. Merchant says much of her inspiration comes from magazines and books, but "other times it will just be something I overhear in a bus station."

She is entirely responsible for the lyrics.

But the rest of the band contributes to the music.

"Everyone generally writes songs separately," says guitarist Robert Buck. "They're generally a song musically before Natalie writes lyrics."

Buck said he expects more from this record. "We haven't made our best album yet," he says. "It's still two to three albums away."

Keyboardist Dennis Drew agrees, al-

though he adds that "It's really impossible to tell until you get through. You have to believe."

"I think the last record was about being focused, clear," he says. "The last record was concentrating on the beat, the arrangement, the vocals — to get the point across; to be very clear about what we felt and thought."

He said he is proud of the band's role in that accomplishment. "proud of the rhythm and the incredible precision."

But this time the album "is going to be strong, maybe a bit scary, hopefully a little more mysterious, at times musically — I don't want to use the words exotic — maybe daring."

In bassist Steven Gustafson's words, "the last record was sort of sky-blue and this next one is going to be a forest-green."