

**THE PLAIN DEALER**

# Scene & Heard

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# Moondog Ball redux classy and fast-paced

By JANE SCOTT

PLAIN DEALER ROCK REPORTER

So it didn't have the rough jolt of the world's first rock concert — Alan Freed's Moondog Coronation Ball at the old Arena 44 years ago.

Saturday night's Alan Freed Birthday Ball in the round at Cleveland State University Convocation Center had its own share of surprises, lasted longer (4½ hours) and had a classier cast.



Lewis

It featured five Rock and Roll Hall of Famers — The Coasters, the Soul Stirrers, the Shirelles, the Platters with Herb Reed, and headliner Jerry Lee Lewis ("The Killer").

It even had Freed's brother, lawyer David P. Freed of Painesville, on stage saying "Hi Moondoggers!" — the only one up there who could say that. The concert promoters, Canterbury Productions of Merrillville, Ind., and WDOK-FM/102.1, have been temporarily enjoined from using that term after a lawsuit by previous Moondog Ball promoter, the OmniAmerica group (WMMS-FM/100.7 and WMJI-FM/105.7).

Freed also said that there were "pretenders" out there who would use the Moondog Coronation Ball name, but that his brother's four children and surviving spouse own the name. (In fact, Freed said earlier that he had filed a suit March 15 in U.S. Dis-

## MUSIC REVIEW

Alan Freed Birthday Ball

strict Court here to prohibit the use of the term Moondog Ball. The suit also seeks damages. He had given permission for the Freed name in this show title.)

Lewis, only 17 at the first Moondog Ball, seemed fragile when he climbed up to the piano on stage. His performance was a little uneven, but he pulled it off. He kicked off with Chuck Berry's robust "Roll Over Beethoven," but followed with a rather tepid "Over the Rainbow." Blues songs slowed down the pace a bit, as Lewis occasionally slurred his words. But then came the thunderous "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," and more than a hundred fans rushed to the stage area and danced. Lewis kicked away his piano stool, threw one leg on the keyboard and then ripped into a searing "Great Balls of Fire."

The first concert surprise was Vietnam veteran Len Hawthorne, 49, of Mansfield. The three Shirelles saluted him when he came on stage and danced with him during their No. 1, 3 million-selling song, "Soldier Boy." The singers met him 28 years ago when they sang at Fort Campbell, Ky., and one of them had sat on his lap.

The Shirelles, in their sequined tangerine dresses, were a blast of sunshine with their 1960 song,

"Will You Love Me Tomorrow?" — still one of the most heartfelt of all love songs.

The Platters had lost their lead singer, Tony Williams, but new lead Tony Funches, had such a powerful voice that the 9,000-member audience groaned when Funches said it was time they had to get the hell off the stage. He particularly soared on "The Great Pretender" and on "Only You (And You Alone)."

The Coasters' lead singer Carl Gardner added a moving note when he thanked the Lord Jesus for his second chance in life. Three years ago he had a malignant tumor in his neck, since healed.

A neat note this time was gathering four lead singers — James Somerville of the Diamonds, Jay Siegel of the Tokens, Norman Wright of the Del Vikings and Arlene Smith of the Chantels — into a super group. The surprise for many was the amazing lyric soprano of elementary teacher Smith singing "Maybe," the song she recorded when she was 14. The Soul Stirrers dedicated "Chain Gang" and "A Change Is Gonna Come" to late member Sam Cooke.

Among the emcees were Bill Randle and Carl Reece of WRMR-AM 850 and Norm N. Nite of New York's WCBS-FM.

I've seen several of the anniversary balls, but this had a snappier pace and more pizzazz.

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