

Can Queen become the next superstar?

The British quartet will take a bow at Public Hall on Valentine's Day and it's beginning to look like a full house.

"Tickets are doing so well that I think it will be a sellout," said Jim Marchyshyn of Belkin Productions.

The four rockers will be winging in with two huge trucks, 14 road men, a dry-ice smoke generator, a bubble machine and five tons of equipment.

"We're looking forward to Cleveland. It's a good town for us," said bass player John Deacon, calling from the Elektra Record office in New York.

(Queen's first move here was a miss. Guitarist Brian May was hit with hepatitis and was hospitalized in New York. The group's second try was a socko success at Music Hall.)

But a lot has happened to you in a year and a lot has happened to Queen.

The group's single, "Bohemian Rhapsody," dared to break radio's unwritten law of three-minute songs. It's six minutes. Yet it sold 150,000 in its first 20 days.

The song became No. 1 in England and was on the British pop charts for 10 weeks, the largest-selling song in 10 years.

"To tell you the truth, even we got bored with it, even though it is untypical and it's kind of complicated," said Deacon.

So far Queen's album, "A Night at the Opera," has sold more than 1,250,000 copies world-wide.

Queen now has Elton John's manager, John Reid, as its manager, and that's what they call good company.

Now general magazines are getting into their act. Queen got a king-sized writeup in Time Magazine this week, with words about their "gleaming a cappella vocal harmonies."

"Rock music with clarity," summed up William Howard Saturday in the Boston Globe, following Queen's two-day show at Music Hall there.

They opened with as much flash and intensity as most groups wind up with in their encores, wrote John David Kalodner Monday in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The group also has vocalist Freddie Mercury, a strong-featured man who even looks masculine in pastel satin.

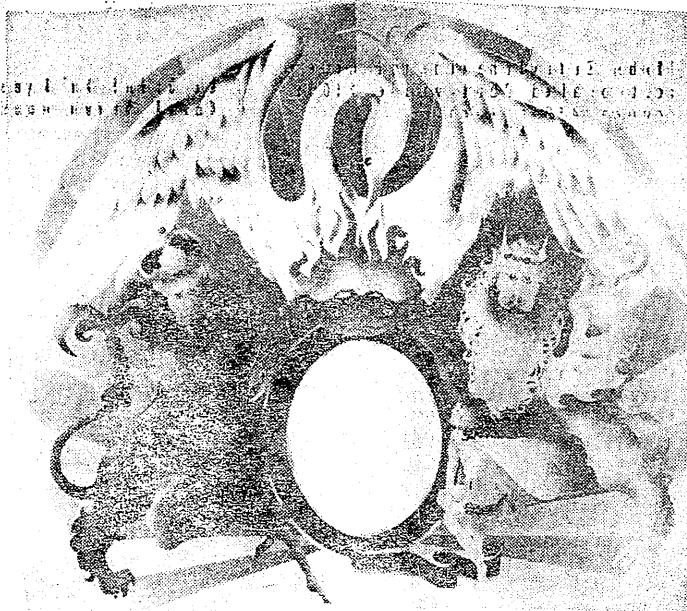
"I feel that after every show that there is more we can do," said drummer Roger Meddows-Taylor. "But it's the reach that counts."

"We feel that we are improving every year. Actually, getting there is the fun," he added.

In some of their shows the band has worn chain metal costumes. In Philadelphia they wore white suits. They haven't chosen their Cleveland costuming yet.

"But there will be a few surprises," Deacon said. "You can say that it's livelier than last time."

Some people are still surprised that Queen has stayed intact for so long, going on six years now.



Can Queen become a superking?

By Jane Scott



Queen, left to right: Roger Meddows-Taylor, Freddie Mercury, Brian May and John Deacon.

"That's quite a while. Most rock groups break up before that, but we intend to stay together," said Deacon.

Even good Cleveland bands like I Don't Care break up. So what's their success secret?

"No secret, but now that I think about there are probably some sound factors," said Meddows-Taylor.

"First off, we divide the labor well, I think. We all write individually and then arrange the songs together. Mercury wrote 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and our 'Killer Queen,' but we all contributed," he said.

Secondly, the band keeps a loose social arrangement. Unlike the Who, who admit they don't particularly enjoy each other's company, Queen will go to occasional clubs together. But they don't overdo. They cherish the time with their families and friends.

Queen is also aware of the importance of keeping the original members.

"That way you identify in people's mind, as the Who and Zeppelin do. But more than that, you are a key unit, and identify in your own minds. When you add or change personnel you often get a change of direction," Meddows-Taylor said.

The name Queen has never caused them any trouble, although some American fans thought that British royalty would howl.

"We never meant the name as derogatory and besides now everyone is so used to it and doesn't analyze it," added Deacon.

Deacon was surprised to find so many British import albums at WMMS and at other radio stations.

"Even ones that haven't caught on so well in England. That's great," he said.

American music is not exactly at its peak in England, he said.

"Bruce Springsteen is sort of catching on, though. He did two concerts — that's not enough — and he was weighed down with all that ridiculous publicity, but he is very talented. He just will have to fight through all that publicity," he said.

Patti Smith? English people have heard of her and are waiting for her, but have not heard her music.

"You know, an album costs 3 pounds 50 over there, that's about \$7 and that's a lot with the economy the way it is," Deacon explained.

Many are surprised to learn about Queen's scholastic lineage. The band has more of an educational base than most groups.

May, the guitar, piano and bell player, has a B.Sc. in Physics and has taught at a British comprehensive school. He was an astronomer for four years. Mercury has a degree in graphics. Meddows-Taylor has a biology degree from London Hospital Medical College and studied dentistry in college. Deacon received a first honors degree in electronics at Chelsea College.

Queen just may ace it.