



chris batten & the wood

PHOTO BY ONNIE KOSKI

CHRIS BATTEN & THE WOOD
Court Tavern/Nov. 11

by Martin Halo

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ—With the bulk of New Jersey's music community attending the annual Asbury Music Awards, another outstanding nominee whose musical endeavors and contributions have earned significant mention was about to perform—Chris Batten & The Woods.

With his long hair loosely spilling out of a classic derby hat and sporting a vintage leather jacket, Dustin Packard (guitars) inconspicuously sits quietly at the back bar as Chris Batten (guitars/vocals) and Al Radice (bass) remain outside.

Unloading equipment from the back of their touring van, the process begins of relocating their traveling road show to the bowels of the quickly filling New Brunswick pub.

An array of vintage amplifiers, ranging

in textual tone from Fender to Vox, provided an aesthetically pleasing vibe of rock-roll allure, as bottles of beer stand upright sprawled across every available horizontal gear case.

At the stroke of midnight, Batten & The Woods took the stage to a room packed with an overwhelming number of faithful, jumpstarting the evening with a proclamation of "I feel like dancing!"

Rich Pearce's (drums) spinning drum sticks followed by a four-count launched "Sad Songs," as Packard confidently expelled guitar licks with a strut that yielded a flurry of notes, located solidly inside of Batten's groove, with one foot savagely stomping on a floor monitor.

The band are gradually starting to look more and more like road warriors, rough around the edges, brash, and unshaven, as Batten's reverberating black Converse keep time on the Court Tavern floor.

With Batten glancing at the set list in between songs, which is crudely written on a piece of yellow lined paper at his feet, his bandmates retreat to their stash of alcohol. "The Rifles," sat in the heart of the set which was followed by a crowd pleasing "Riot In The Streets."

The Woods convincingly commanded the attention of the entire barroom and stand as a rare credible musical entity—a feat that is becoming of only a few bands which are rising to the top of the Jersey musical landscape.

As Batten strapped on his harmonica harness and latched his Telecaster securely to his shoulder, cries of "Driver" permeate the crowd.

The set was capped off with a wall of feedback and an all-out blistering rendition of "Swagger," highlighted by dueling guitar solos which not only brought the entire barroom to life, but lit it on fire.