

Concert Review

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS

The Strand, April 9

by Pat Kramer



The Fabulous Thunderbirds have always been known for their guitar power, driving harmonica and raw vocals of frontman **Kim Wilson**. Unfortunately, that winning formula has changed. In their first show in L.A. since guitarist **Duke Robillard** left the band, their per-

formance lacked warmth and seemed stiff, as Wilson tried to carry the show on his own.

Wilson did his part, delivering an energetic performance with substantial harp solos. However, without the blazing guitars of **Jimmie Vaughn** or **Robillard** behind him, he seemed to be going through the motions, with minimal band and audience interaction. Sound difficulties contributed to the problems.

A welcome addition to the show was piano player, **Gene Taylor**, who cast a whole new light on the sound, adding honkytonk fills that accentuated Wilson's vocals. Formerly of the **Blasters**, Taylor joined the band four months ago, after the departure of Robillard. Wilson's vocals were customarily

strong as he performed T-Bird's "hit" material, "*Tuff Enuff*," "*Wrap It Up*," "*Tear It Up*" and "*Paralyzed*." However, the band's trademark sound since their inception in 1974 was missing.

This may be the beginning of a new sound for the T-Bird's, with the focus returning to Wilson. It could also be a great opportunity for guitarist **Kip Bangham**, who's been with band for three years. Bangham summed it up by saying "It leaves more room for me to fill. We are returning to the original sound with one guitarist." However there was a certain sadness as well. "I miss playing with Duke Robillard. He was a great guitarist and a friend."

East L.A. band **The Blazers** opened for the Thunderbird's, adding a zesty combination of rockabilly and Mexican Ranchero sound to the night's festivities.